A

DEFENCE

OF

THE ASSOCIATE SYNOD

AGAINST

THE CHARGE OF SEDITION:

ADDRESSED TO

WILLIAM PORTEOUS, D.D.

IN REPLY TO HIS PAMPHLET,

ENTITLED,

"THE NEW LIGHT EXAMINED; OR, OBSERVATIONS ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE ASSOCIATE SYNOD AGAINST THEIR OWN STANDARDS."

BY JAMES PEDDIE,

MINISTER OF THE ASSOCIATE CONGREGATION OF BRISTO STREET, EDINBURGH.

He that paſſeth by, and meddleth with ſtrife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears. PROV. xxvi, 17.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

DEFENCE, &c.

REV. SIR,

I PRESUME, from the ſtately remark with which you conclude your "New Light examined," that I am not one of thoſe few privileged members of the Aſſociate Synod whoſe perſons can be recognized by your piercing eye. This honour I ſurrender without regret to my brethren in Glaſgow; and only lament, that, owing to "the democratical modes of government in our little ſocieties *," the ſpecimen of Seceding miniſters whoſe perſons have been ſubmitted to your curious inſpection, has been ſuch as to raiſe in ſo pious and loyal a breaſt an horror of the whole order.

But although the obſcurity of my ſtation, and other unpropitious circumſtances, have concealed me hitherto from the eyes of ſo accurate a judge of merit, your greater celebrity has expoſed your character to my attention, and your perſon to my view. So conſpicuous and loyal a figure, decorated with a theological title, and other theological ornaments, and perpetually buſtling about great things or ſmall, with which it has, or it has no connection, could not have eſcaped the obſervation of a perſon

* New Light Examined, p. 4.

whoſe opportunities were fewer, and whoſe curioſity was leſs than mine.

Sir, I know you well; not only by fame, but "even by perſon." I ſhall not ſoon forget the man to whom my attention was ſo irreſiſtibly attracted in the General Aſſembly of the Church of Scotland, when he declaimed, with ſuch illiberal vehemence, againſt the poor illiterate Seceders, as to call up another Doctor, of greater reſpectability, in their vindication. I yet admire that extent of information, and profundity of reſearch, which enabled him to ſtate to the appalled Aſſembly the immenſe numbers, and rapid increaſe of Seceders; and to calculate, with the accuracy of a miniſter of finance, the ſum annually extracted from the pockets of the loweſt orders of the people, for erecting Seceding meeting-houſes, and maintaining Seceding miniſters;---a ſum ſo enormous that it could almoſt ſupport *one* biſhop, ſhould he reſide in Scotland!!! Nor have I ceaſed to wonder at that ability which enlivened the dry details of numbers, by philippics againſt that illiterate yet deſigning claſs of men who conduct the devotions of Seceders, and by pathetic lamentations over the infatuated multitudes who reſign themſelves to the ſpiritual care of ſuch incapable guides.

It would be highly improper for me at preſent, as I am not whiſpering in your private ear, to ſay how much additional knowledge I have obtained of you, ſince your talents firſt burſt on me in the New-church aiſle. Your own authority convinces me, that "it would be improper to have recourſe to private hiſtory in judging of public conduct *." Yet I confeſs that long after I had begun to admire you, I had much of your character to learn. Some men muſt be long ſtudied, and examined

* P. 5.

in various points of view, before they can be thoroughly known. And such a man is Dr Porteous. I had then seen---pardon an expression, which, as you remark of another Seceder " expression, is new, and not very accurate *,"---I had then seen only one *face* of your character. I had hastily marked you down as nothing more than a fierce church-man, of some ability, and of the race of Sacheverel, who considered all separation as schism, and all schism as damnable, and who would have looked on it as not less beneath him to plead the cause than to know the persons of Seceders. Had it not been for your late publication, I should have continued to under-rate your talents and mistake your character; nor could I easily have been persuaded that, after having bawled so loudly and so long, 'The Church is in danger,' you would have had either strength or inclination to vociferate with the lungs of a Stentor the dangers of the Secession. You have astonished me with the versatility of your talents. You can be Churchman and Dissenter by turns. Your parts equally fit you to defend, or betray the Church; to attack, or vindicate the Secession.

I have often been puzzled, but seldom more so than at present. In my attempts at a classification of characters, I know not in what order to place yours. At once the defender of the opposite faiths of the church and of the Secession; the bulwark of the one, and the main pillar of the other! You are doubtless a non-descript: or shall I place you among the amphibia, as capable of living alternately in two different elements? For you seem, by your late publication, to be as much at home when moving in the dense and *muddy* waters of the Secession, as when breathing the pure air of the Church.

* P. 48.

A ſuperficial reader of your book will ſuppoſe you a Seceder, and of the moſt rigid caſt; and can be undeceived, only by having his attention called to the learning which you diſplay, and to the ignorance which you diſcover;—an ignorance of the perſons and principles, political and religious, of Seceding miniſters, and a learning "reſpecting," "regarding," or "in matters of*" grammar and Roman law, which are equally unſuitable to the character of a genuine Seceder.

It is probable indeed that ſome of my friends may have been gulled by your ſpecious profeſſions of zeal for their peculiar tenets, and may be ready to adore the man who has been raiſed up to ſupport with the vigour of youth the tottering fabric of the Seceſſion, and to vindicate its principles, after they are ſuppoſed to have been abandoned by their natural defenders. Sir, We have ſimple men among us, of greater integrity than diſcernment. Theſe will be apt to ſuppoſe you in earneſt, becauſe you look grave; ſincere, becauſe you are warm. Ignorant of your determined and deſperate hoſtility to the Seceſſion, they will conclude that you cannot poſſibly have been aiming a ſtroke at its vitals, while you were rouſing them to adhere to their principles, lamenting their diviſions, and affecting to tremble at the thought of the approaching "degradation" of their church. They have no idea how it is poſſible to aſſume the language, without having previouſly adopted the ſentiments of Seceders. They know not what *ſome* men can do to ſerve a turn.

* See a choice morſel of criticiſm on the eſſential difference between theſe ſynonymous phraſes in the Doctor's pamphlet, pages 38, 39. The Roman law aſcertains the vulgar uſe of English words !!!

This is indeed an age of wonders. Revolutions the moſt ſurpriſing, and the moſt abſurd, have taken place in the opinions of men, in reſpect both to religion and to politics; and in ſuch a time as this, it is even *poſſible* that the Doctor may have become a Seceder.

I cannot, however, for my own part, entertain an idea ſo degrading to your reputation for ſenſe and learning, as the world would connect with that of a ſincere belief of the peculiarities of the Seceſſion. It ſhall be my buſineſs to prevent, as much as in me lies, the opinion of your converſion from obtaining currency. I ſhall tell them, that you only put on a maſk to amuſe yourſelf a little at their expence; aud that in fact you have leſs faith in the formal obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant, than thoſe of their miniſters who are moſt prone to innovation. The arguments which I propoſe to uſe with this view, I ſhall ſubmit to your ſuperior judgment in the hope of your approbation.

I know from my own experience, that men require only ſlight evidence to convince them of the reality of what they fervently wiſh to be true. The Burgher Seceſſion has never yet enjoyed the honour of having a Doctor of divinity among its adherents; their miniſters have been too poor to purchaſe the title, and too illiterate to deſerve it. Though they have exiſted ſo long as you ſtate in your introduction, they have never been able to boaſt even of one among them learned in the Roman law. The conſequence which ſuch an acquiſition would give them in their own eyes, and in thoſe of their country, may have miſled their judgment. I ſhall warn them againſt falling into an opinion which would not occaſion leſs mortification to them, when detected to be a miſtake, than ground of exultation if it poſſibly could be true.---You know, Sir, we have no rewards which

could compenſate for your loſs of emolument and fame; and you could not become a Seceder without ſome *valid* reaſon for the change.

But I ſhall not ſtop here. I ſhall remind my friends that it does not uniformly follow, that a man believes doctrines becauſe he *affects* to believe them; and that the love of fame, of gain, or even of miſchief, may excite him to exert his talents in defence of principles at which he ſneers, or of a party which he abhors. I ſhall caution them againſt the folly of meaſuring either the intellectual or moral powers of other men by their own, and remind them that, though *they* cannot act a part to ſerve a purpoſe, there are ſome who can. I ſhall inform, that an Egyptian, who was transformed into a demigod of the name of *Proteus*, and a relation, I ſuppoſe, of your own, was famed in ancient times for dexterity in changing at pleaſure his ſhape; and that perhaps you may inherit ſome portion of his powers of ſpontaneous converſion. In fine, I ſhall prove from your own book, that however favourably you think of the Seceding cauſe, you are not yet a Seceder; for you ſtill diſlike "thoſe democratical modes of government, to which they have been habituated in their own little ſocieties *;" in other words, are the friend of patronage, and hoſtile to thoſe liberties of the Chriſtian people, which are the baſis on which the Seceſſion reſts.

My friends will doubtleſs be curious to learn, ſince you are neither a Seceder, nor a friend to Seceders, what could induce you to waſte your talents in defence of a cauſe which it has been one great object of your life to cruſh. It will not be in my power, perhaps, to ſatisfy them as I could wiſh; as I know that "it would be improper to have recourſe to *private* hiſtory in judg-

* Page 4.

ing of public conduct* ." I can only put them off with ſuch general anſwers as theſe ;---that ſome men poſſeſs ſo reſtleſs an activity of nature, that they will rather do miſchief than be idle ;---that every walk of literature is now crowded with ſo many adventurers for fame, that it is difficult to find out an unoccupied ſubject ;---that it was an untrodden path to attempt a defence of the Seceſſion againſt Seceders, to reſcue it from *degradation* by vilifying the characters and attempting to *ſuſpend* the perſons of its miniſters ;---that the novelty of the ſubject would compenſate for its lowneſs, the manner of treating it for the vulgarity of the theme ;---and that fame would be acquired even by daring, what few could have had courage to attempt, to procure the expatriation of the great body of Seceders, and ſet the remaining few by the ears.

I was once afraid that your labours had proved abortive. I heard of your pamphlet, while yet in its embryo ſtate, before the laſt meeting of the Aſſociate Synod, and from the delay of its publication ſuſpected that, with increaſe of years, you felt a diminution of capacity to finiſh the great work which you had with ſuch patriotiſm begun. It has at laſt appeared ; and a peruſal of it has ſatisfied me that the delay proceeded from a very different cauſe. You had been ſtunned by the Synod's addreſs ; which threatened the loſs of your labour, by oppoſing an authoritative explanation of their meaning to your private and ſtrained interpretations, and by denying, in the moſt ſolemn manner, that political infidelity, and that deſire of theological innovation, which you had aſſerted to be the private ſpring of their conduct. It required ſeveral months even for a bold man to collect as much courage as to perſiſt in oppoſing his conſtructions

* Page 5.

to their aſſertions, and to dare, after a Synod of upwards of an hundred miniſters, and as many elders, had declared, that they never meant to innovate their principles, that they never underſtood the queſtions which had been agitated among them as connected with politics, that they were firmly attached to our glorious conſtitution and the family of Hanover, that they deteſted rebellion, and recommended peace, ſubjection, fidelity, loyalty to thoſe under their inſpection,—to dare to aſcribe their former ſilence to ſeditious deſign, and to ſtyle their preſent declarations, "a parade of loyalty *, the cant language of party, the meaning of which is not miſtaken †;"—to dare, in other words, to ſay, Gentlemen, you lie. Sir, had I the front of Dr Porteous, I would ſay, that nothing but the conſciouſneſs of his own inſincerity in his moſt ſolemn profeſſions, could lead any man to affirm, without evidence, and againſt evidence, that the profeſſions of others, whoſe characters are at leaſt as fair as his own, are hollow and inſincere.

But, Sir, your labours were too precious to be loſt to the public, merely by ſo unfortunate an occurrence, as a declaration on the part of the Aſſociate Synod, which put you completely out in your conjectures, and expoſed the weakneſs or malignity of your arguments. Your book might ſtill be read, your reaſoning be reckoned concluſive, your calumnies obtain credit, by many who had never ſeen, or would diſdain to peruſe a pamphlet publiſhed by the authority of the Aſſociate Synod. The effect would thus be the ſame; the Seceders would ſuffer in the eſtimation of their country. And who would not rather glorioufly violate juſtice, and propagate falſehood and calumny, than, by exceſs of delicacy, ſuffer a fair opportunity to cruſh a formidable enemy to eſcape?

* Page 52. † ibid.

Per fas et nefas, by foul means and fair, let the Seceſſion be exterminated. If we cannot preach better, or live better, than thoſe ſectarians; if we cannot ruin them in the eſtimation of the people by declaiming againſt the narrowneſs and bigotry of their principles, their fanaticiſm, their antitolerance, their ignorance, their blind adherence to the opinions of their forefathers; if experience has ſhown us that, notwithſtanding every attempt of this kind, they multiply and grow every day more formidable, let us change our mode of attack: Let us boldly charge them with an entire abandonment of their own principles; this will diſunite them among themſelves: Let us accuſe them of ſedition and rebellion; this will expoſe them to the deſerved vengeance of their country.

Every thing conſpired to favour the plot. The chief conſpirator had courage and capacity; the general aſpect of the times was admirably fitted for obtaining attention to the cry of treaſon, from whatever quarter it might proceed; the Seceſſion was divided reſpecting a queſtion of their own; they had gone to law on a caſe of civil property; and if the moment for action ſhould be loſt, a century might elapſe before one equally favourable would recur. You had too much experience not to ſee the critical moment, too much malignity not to ſeize it. At this moment, "the New Light Examin-" ed" made its appearance; but whether it ſhall produce the ruin of the Seceſſion, or of the character of its author, it is not difficult to predict. *Fiat juſtitia, ruat celum.* We live in a country, and we bleſs God for it, in which innocence will be protected, and defamers treated with merited contempt; a country, the conſtitution of which is better adjuſted than it would have been by *ſoi-diſant* philoſophers, and which is unſpeakably better governed than it would be by crafty *intermeddling* prieſts.

The deſign of your pamphlet, according to your own aſſertion, is more than innocent; it is patriotic and benevolent in no common degree. It is intended to prevent "the degradation of the Seceſſion," and "to warn the friends of our happy conſtitution of the great danger *" to which they are expoſed by the principles of Seceders. You avow yourſelf at once the guardian of the honour of the Seceſſion, and of the life and liberties of your countrymen; and you proclaim a cruſade againſt Seceding miniſters as the moſt effectual means of preſerving both.

Give me leave to ſay, however, that your qualifications for the taſk you have aſſigned yourſelf are far below mediocrity. By your own confeſſion, you have no knowledge *whatever* of the perſons whom you devote to the execration of mankind. "Your remarks," you ſay, "*can* have no reference to particular members of the Aſſociate Synod, *as* not more than one or two of thoſe are known to the writer, *even* by perſon †." The ſentence is elegant and inſtructive. I have learnt two things from it, by which I hope to profit: firſt, that it is impoſſible to know any thing of the character, or ſay any thing againſt the principles, of men with whom one is not acquainted *by perſon;* and ſecondly, that a knowledge of a man *by perſon*, will enable one to decide on the nature of his political creed. You *could* have applied your general accuſations of ſedition to particular members of the Aſſociate Synod, if you had known them *even by perſon:* But you cannot apply them to individuals, as you know nothing of them at all; nothing of their names, nothing of their creed, nothing of their loyalty, nothing of their ſedition; as you know them not *even* by perſon. They are cumulatively ſeditious; they may,

* Page 55. † Ibid.

for any thing you know to the contrary, be each of them individually peaceable and loyal.

It appears, however, from what you ſay elſewhere, that your knowledge of the individuals compoſing the Aſſociate Synod is wonderfully extenſive and minute. Though you know them not *even* by perſon, you inſinuate that your capacious mind is ſtored with much "private hiſtory *" reſpecting them, which would illuminate your dark arguments in proof of their treaſonable deſigns, but which a tenderneſs for their reputation, liberty, and life, obliges you to conceal. I beſeech you, Sir, out with it. Your country demands it of you, that you conceal not the names of the traitors, nor withhold the evidence of which you are poſſeſſed to eſtabliſh their guilt. Will Dr Porteous incur the guilt of miſpriſon of treaſon? Let not exceſſive tenderneſs to individuals implicate you in the guilt to which you are privy. Beſides, diſtention is a painful ſtate; and I am confident that to diſburden yourſelf will give you inexpreſſible relief.

Your acquaintance with the political principles of the Seceding miniſters is much more particular than mine; which, Sir, is the more wonderful, as you have not the leaſt knowledge of "more than one or two of them," not even by perſon, while I have the happineſs to know them all by perſon, and moſt of them more intimately. Your ſuperior diſcernment has more than ſupplied your want of opportunity; it has made you acquainted with thoſe of whom you have no knowledge whatever. You are certain, that "the *people* who are connected with the Aſſociate Synod †," are all loyal and good ſubjects; nay, that it was their "patriotiſm ‡," which has in part thwarted our meaſures, driven many

* Page 5. † Page 44. ‡ Page 45.

of them from our communion, and will ſoon drive off the remaining few. You are certain that "the *majority* of the members of Synod are uncontaminated in their religious and political principles *." The traitors are "a *few* individuals †;" and you give the world reaſon to conclude, that you know their preciſe number, their names, their place of reſidence, their particular acts and plans of treaſon, and could unfold all, were you diſpoſed to open your precious volume of "private hiſtory." You are not, Sir, as you pretend, the friend of the Seceſſion if you conceal what you know. Of what are you afraid? The people are all loyal; the majority of the members of Synod are uncontaminated with ſedition; only a few are corrupted; and can the champion of the Seceſſion, its ſincereſt friend, and ableſt advocate, ſuffer it be degraded by withholding the information which it is in his power to give! The pure part of the Synod, and that you know is the great majority of its members, will thank you for particulars. They will do more than "whine the ſong of loyalty ‡;"--they will purge the ſociety of ſuch unworthy members; and while they diſcharge their duty to their country, will attempt, what is more difficult, to aſſuage the wrath of Dr Porteous.

Pray, Sir, who are theſe *few?* Are they the one or two in Glaſgow whom you know by perſon? Or are they the members of that committee of Synod, whoſe bungling works have offended your taſte, and provoked your rage? Or are they, in fine, thoſe individuals, to pleaſe whom a majority of Synod abandoned the act of forbearance, and adopted the Preamble? Had you ſatisfied yourſelf with finding *conſtructive* ſedition in their principles, I could have had no title to demand their names,

* Page 44. † Ibid. ‡ Page 55.

or your proofs. But you make a direct charge againſt certain individuals; and the man is a ſlanderer who brings a charge which he cannot, or will not prove. The people of the Seceſſion know that you cannot produce one proof of your aſſertion. Thoſe of them who diſapprove of the Synod's procedure, who have even formed a new aſſociation out of diſlike to a Preamble which they were the firſt to approve, will do the Synod the juſtice to declare, that politics had *no* ſhare in the queſtions which have been debated, and that, bad as they ſuppoſe the Synod to be, they would ſuffer no enemies of their country to ſit among them. They know that it was not *patriotiſm* that induced them to oppoſe the new Formula, the interim queſtions, or the Preamble: it was attachment, not to political, but eccleſiaſtical doctrines; miſtaken, indeed, but zealous attachment to what they ſuppoſed the *religious* ideas of their fathers. I truſt they alſo know, that it is not zeal for the Seceſſion, nor love to your country, which has brought you forward, with ſo vile a calumny in your mouth, againſt the miniſters of the Seceſſion.

Sir, The miniſters of the Seceſſion are loyal men. They are loyal from principle; from conſcience. They love their king: they love their country. They pray for him as their lawful ſovereign; and they bleſs God for the free and happy conſtitution of Britain, which protects them from the fangs of bigots, who would perſecute them becauſe they are Diſſenters, and who debaſe themſelves by collecting every idle tale to their prejudice which can feaſt their own malevolence.

To this I know your reply: It is all affectation and "cant:" "the ſong of loyalty whined *" to the tune of neceſſity.---The effrontery which dictates ſuch a re-

* Pages 52, 53.

ply is fit for treaſons. That we are loyal, we have ſaid to our brethren, in our late 'Addreſs to the people under our charge;' we have ſaid it to our country, by our uniformly peaceable conduct as citizens; we have ſaid it to our king, in our humble and dutiful addreſs to the throne;---we ſay it, every firſt day of the week, to our God in the preſence of his people, by our prayers for his life, and the ſtability of his throne: Yet Dr Porteous, an enlightened, and it ought to have followed, a liberal man,---a Chriſtian miniſter, dares to look us gravely in the face, and to ſay, that we have deceived our country, have impoſed on our king, and inſult our God! And why? He has "private hiſtory" which, did not prudence or compaſſion forbid him, he could produce;—private hiſtory which would demonſtrate, that the miniſters of the Seceſſion, though they live quiet and peaceable lives; though they have ſolemnly aſſured their brethren, their country, their king, that they are loyal; though their ſermons, their prayers, their printed works, all breath a ſpirit of loyalty, are in their hearts rebels, and ought to be conſidered as the enemies of their country!

But, Sir, let me do you no injuſtice. You inſinuate that you have a "private hiſtory *" of Seceding miniſters; and your veracity who will call in queſtion? It contains, it muſt be preſumed, the detail of their atrocious deeds and dark deſigns. To demand an inſpection of the manuſcript, the peruſal of its contents, or the production of the authorities on which it reſts, might be deemed impertinent. *You* have pronounced it authentic: and your critical ſagacity and candour are unqueſtionable.—Beſides, the charges it contains are of a nature which render them probable, from the circumſtan-

* Page 5.

tees of the caſe! The people accuſed are Seceders, a ſpecies of diſſenters from the Eſtabliſhed Church; and is it not *ex facie* evident that the man who does not profeſs the religion, cannot be the ſincere friend of the government, of his country! They ſet up the plea of conſcience againſt ſubjection to the ſpiritual authority of their pariſh-miniſters; and is it conceiveable, that they can be ſubject to their civil governors for conſcience ſake! Yea farther, being miniſters, and at the ſame time diſſenters, they can have no *ſufficient* motive for being dutiful ſubjects! To talk of being good ſubjects, merely from love to our gracious Sovereign, merely from approbation of the free and admirably well-adjuſted conſtitution of our country, or merely from the authority of the Divine law, is unmeaning cant, is to whine an old ſong! Volunteers in loyalty! Impoſſible: Who would work without pay?

You produce, however, one argument in proof of their diſloyalty, which you deem ſo deciſive as to ſuperſede the neceſſity of the evidence of facts. They have, in your opinion, abandoned the original principles of the Seceſſion, yea, have been guilty of a total "derelict ion of the principles which they had ſworn to maintain *." Whether the charge be true, or whether, granting it to be true, your argument be concluſive, I ſtay not at preſent to examine. I only expreſs my aſtoniſhment that ſuch an argument ſhould ever have been employed by a miniſter of the Eſtabliſhed Church. It ſhould ſeem then, that the teſt of loyalty is, not connection with the Church, but ſeparation from her communion; and that to avoid the charge of ſedition, every Scotchman ought to become a Seceder, and every Sece-

* Page 36.

der be ſtedfaſt in his adherence to all the opinions originally adopted by that proſcribed ſect! Was it the patriotiſm of the firſt Seceders which compelled them to form their ſeparate Aſſociation? Or are there no true friends to the conſtitution, either in the church, or among the diſſenters, who believe not *in all points* as the original Seceders believed?

You reſt not your argument on the general ground of alleged innovations in their principles: you urge the particular nature of theſe innovations, that they affect at once the vitals of the Seceſſion, and the ſafety of the ſtate. We have removed "the baſis of our new Aſſociation *," and have ſet aſide "the fundamental articles of our confederation;"—we are therefore no longer true Seceders. We have, beſides, raiſed with impious hands, "the anchor of our ſtandards which enabled us to ride out ſo many ſtorms †," have "ſet afloat the doctrine, worſhip, diſcipline and government of the Church of Scotland on the ſtormy ſea of the preſent times," and "committed this ſmall bark to the variable winds of innovation, or the fierce tempeſt of infidelity ‡:"—we are therefore enemies to the Eſtabliſhed Church. We have, in fine, "retained a Preamble which, like a poſtern gate, will give us admiſſion to the fortreſs of the conſtitution as ſoon as the day of danger returns ‖:"—we are, therefore, enemies to the State.—Theſe, Sir, are ſerious charges; expreſſed in the glowing language of poetry, and calculated, by captivating the imagination of your admiring readers, to command a momentary belief. It is happy for the Seceders, that the charges which they contain are as poetical as the words in which they are expreſſed; that, while the language is all figure, the ſentiment is all fiction.

* Page 48. † Page 19. ‡ Ibid. ‖ Page 55.

It requires no great penetration to ſee, that theſe three charges, as brought by you, have one object and aim. You employ the firſt merely as ſcaffolding to enable you to rear the ſecond, and the ſecond as the main pillar on which you ſupport the third. If, however, I can ſhow that there is no neceſſary, nor even natural connection between theſe articles of charge;—that though you ſhould prove that we have abandoned the peculiar tenets of the firſt Seceders, it would not follow that we are enemies to civil eſtabliſhments of religion; and that though it were ever ſo evident that we are in our ſentiments adverſe to civil eſtabliſhments of religion, it would not follow that we are ſeditious or diſloyal; it will appear to other people, if not to yourſelf, that you have diſgraced your underſtanding by arguing inconcluſively, and expoſed your malevolence by accuſing the innocent.

That the firſt Seceders were friends to civil eſtabliſhments of religion, is not a matter of doubt. They did not ſeparate from the Church of Scotland becauſe ſhe was eſtabliſhed by law, but becauſe ſhe took advantage of her alliance with the State to oppreſs the heritage of God, and becauſe, baſking in the ſunſhine of temporal proſperity, ſhe ſlumbered and ſlept. "They gloried," as you acknowledge, "in being the deſcendants, and the only true repreſentatives, of the national church *." Yea, as you add, "ever ſince their ſeceſſion, they have carefully preſerved the memory of their deſcent, and held up the national church as the point to which they wiſhed to return, whenever certain obſtacles ſhould be removed †." But now they have preſumed —to do what?—to paſs an act, declaring civil eſtabliſh-

* Page 18. † Ibid.

ments of religion unlawful? aſſerting, that to eſtabliſh it by human law, is contrary to the nature of the New Teſtament church, and an attempt to turn the ſpiritual kingdom of Chriſt into a worldly kingdom? No: Had they done this, your aſſertion, that they have "renounced all connection and alliance with the Church of Scotland *," would have been proved. But, Sir, whether eſtabliſhments were lawful or unlawful, has *never* been a queſtion among *Burgher* Seceders. I know of none of them who have written againſt them; I know of ſome who have written in their defence.

Even the celebrated Hall of London, the ghoſt of whoſe pamphlet, you allege, has been going to and fro for nearly thirty years †, and after affrighting the Seceders, has ſcared your diſturbed imagination, has in no part of his writings taught, that 'all legal eſtabliſhments of religion are improper and unwarrantable.' You have had the curioſity, I ſuſpect, to peruſe the offenſive pamphlet, and have been diſappointed, in not finding the doctrine which it has been alleged to contain. It would have been too candid to acknowledge that Mr Frazer's petition proceeded on a miſtake;—too honeſt and open to intimate your ſuſpicions, that, if the miniſters of the Seceſſion are really adverſe to legal eſtabliſhments, their diſlike to them could not have originated in a pamphlet, publiſhed in the year 1771, and never republiſhed; the ſolitary impreſſion of which had ſcareely ſuch a ſale as to defray the expence of publication; few copies of which at preſent exiſt, and which I am confident, has not been peruſed by one in ten of the preſent Seceding miniſters. You aſſume it as true, that the pamphlet contains the offenſive doctrine; that it has been read by the great body of Seceding miniſters; that they

* Page 18. † Page 9.

have imbibed its ſuppoſed doctrines; that they are enemies to legal eſtabliſhments: and that the alterations which were propoſed to be made in their formula originated in this hoſtility.—Let me whiſper in your ear,—Mr Frazer will not be offended though he ſhould overhear it,—that the pamphlet is *in favour* of the religion eſtabliſhed by law in Scotland; for it is an avowed defence againſt the Antiburghers, of the religious clauſe in the Burgeſs oath, which requires an approbation of that religion; and Mr Hall muſt have murdered his argument if he had taught "that *all* legal eſtabliſhments of religion were," or even that the eſtabliſhed religion of Scotland, when ſeparated from its adventitious impurities, was "improper and unwarrantable."

You make, however, a ſkilful retreat. "Whether the pamphlet alluded to contains any ſuch doctrine, or not, the Aſſociate Synod," you ſay, "have given it a great deal of countenance *." —What countenance, pray, have they given this doctrine? That they have not given it the ſanction of any act of theirs, either approving of it, or making it a matter of forbearance, the world may believe, ſince you have not produced it to ſubſtantiate your charge. That the members of the Aſſociate Synod never argued againſt legal eſtabliſhments, in the courſe of their debates during the five years that the formula has engaged their attention, the Seceſſion knows; and, I preſume, you know, otherwiſe, through the aid of your ſecretary for "private hiſtory," you would have had the courage to aſſert it.—But "they have given it a great deal of countenance!" What countenance? They ſuffered an individual to preſent a petition expreſſed in his own way; without enquiring into the accuracy of the petitioner's ſtatement, they took occaſion from the petition to enquire whether there were occaſion for altering

* Page 10.

or amending the formula of queſtions which had been in uſe among them for the preceding fifteen years;—nay, they did more, they *rejected* the offenſive petition. If it was criminal to ſuffer ſuch a petition to be preſented, it muſt have been meritorious to diſmiſs it: but you are inexorable; and the crime of the Aſſociate Synod is not, in your eyes, even alleviated by repentance. A milder man, a more generous adverſary, would have concluded, that the rejection of the petition is a more deciſive proof, that the Aſſociate Synod are the friends of legal eſtabliſhments, than the inſinuation of any one individual could be, that ſome of their members might perhaps be hoſtile to them.

Of the ſubſtance of the rejected petition of an individual, I ought not, perhaps, to ſay any thing further. I do not conſider the Aſſociate Synod, or myſelf as one of its members, as anſwerable for the truth of the aſſertions, or the accuracy of the ſtatements of petitions, which it was never deemed neceſſary minutely to examine, or which, though examined with accuracy, have been rejected. Yet there is one aſſertion of yours reſpecting this petition which I cannot ſuffer myſelf to overlook. You ſay, that "Mr Frazer mentions the power of the civil magiſtrate in regard to religion, as one of the diſorders which required a remedy, and one of the corruptions which ought to be removed *." Pray, Sir, in what part of his petition does he expreſs himſelf thus? Mr Frazer mentions this indeed as a diſorder which required a remedy, this as a corruption which ought to be removed, that our ſtandards, in his opinion, taught doctrines reſpecting the power of the magiſtrate in regard to religion, which he was afraid ſome of our members did not believe. He no where inſinuates, that

* Page 26.

the doctrine of the Confeſſion on that ſubject was corrupt. It can only be inferred from his words, that the belief of it ought not to be made a term of miniſterial communion, and that, ſince on that ſubject there had long been virtual, there ought to be formal forbearance. Had you been a dull man, I muſt have aſcribed your perverſion of his meaning to incapacity to diſcover it; but as I dare not ſay that you are, I am compelled to aſcribe it to deſign.

Our hoſtility to legal eſtabliſhments of religion you can diſcover, where no eye but your own could ever have diſcovered it. You ſee it in the very propoſal of correcting our formula; it ſtares you in the face in the propoſed act of forbearance, in the propoſed new formula, in the interim queſtions, in fine, in the Preamble. The propoſal to "abrogate, to alter, or even *to explain* *," you conſider as proceeding on what you ſtyle a ſtrange idea that *our* ſtandards are our *own*; that we are at liberty *to explain them*; and that we can *even* explain them, without violating the fundamental articles of our confederation, and ceaſing to be Seceders. It follows, in your imagination, ſince we have *propoſed* to alter, ſince we have *dared* to explain, that we are not true Seceders, that we are not friends to legal eſtabliſhments, yea that we are enemies to the ſtate.

I feel it difficult to reply to reaſoning ſo abſurd. "They have repreſented theſe ſtandards as their own †." Our ſtandards not our own! Ingenious! How can they be our ſtandards, if they are not ours; and if they are ours, where is either the hereſy or ſedition of ſaying ſo?—But they are the ſtandards of the Church of Scotland! Yes, and they are ours alſo; and though we claim an intereſt in the property, you injure us, if you

* Page 48. † Page 49.

ſuppoſe that we mean to rob you of any part of your right. To ſpeak plainly, we wiſh them *more* your own than they are; that every miniſter of the Church of Scotland not only ſubſcribed but believed them, and were as calviniſtic in his private ſentiments, and in his public diſcourſes, as he is in his profeſſed creed. It is becauſe they are not enough *your* ſtandards, that we have ſeceded from your communion, and judge it more accurate language to ſtyle them now the ſtandards of *this Synod*.—But they were the ſtandards of the Church of Scotland "prior to the exiſtence of this Synod *," and "were retained by the Seceders when they ſeparated †" from the parent church! What then? "Every man," you ſay, "will be ſenſible of the oddneſs and abſurdity of theſe expreſſions,—the Confeſſion of Faith of *this Synod*, the Larger Catechiſm of *this Synod*, &c. yet," you add, "they have an important and dangerous meaning which cannot now be miſtaken ‡." Good man! Is it indeed odd, is it abſurd, to ſtyle thoſe ſtandards *ours*, which yet you acknowledge, in the next ſentence, we retained as ours when we ſeparated from the church! Has it indeed, ſince you allow that "we made them the baſis of our new aſſociation," "a dangerous meaning," to ſtyle them the ſtandards of this Synod?—Is it poſſible, Sir, that you was awake when you committed ſuch arrant nonſenſe to paper? It muſt have been a heavy part of your argument indeed, which your genius could not illuſtrate, without having recourſe to ſuch miſerable abſurdities. Common ſenſe, had it been conſulted, would have taught you, that the mere circumſtance of our having deſcended from the Church of Scotland, is no proof that the ſtandards of that church continue to be our ſtandards after our ſeparation from her communion;—that, unleſs

* Page 48. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

we had aſſerted that we ſtill retained them as ours, the preſumption rather was that we had forſaken her ſtandards as well as her communion;—and that, if any doubt could have ariſen whether we retained them as ours or not, the direct method of removing it was to ſtyle them, not the ſtandards of the church which we had left, but *our* ſtandards who had left her;—the ſtandards of *this* Synod.

You affect extreme diſtreſs becauſe the Synod, by this phraſe, have "renounced all relation to and connection with the Church of Scotland *." I ſuſpect that your fear ariſes from an oppoſite cauſe. You have contracted ſuch an averſion to us that you ſeem afraid leſt we be approaching too near the Eſtabliſhed Church, and leſt, after having dared to call the ſtandards of the Church of Scotland the ſtandards of *our* Synod, we ſhould become bolder and bolder, and at length put in our claim, not to the ſtandards merely,—theſe would without regret be given us,—but to the pulpits, to the pariſhes, to to the manſes, to the glebes, to the ſtipends, of the Eſtabliſhed Church, and ſtyle them the pulpits of *this Synod*, the manſes of *this Synod*, the ſtipends of *this Synod*. Be comforted, Sir, we aſk no ſuch boon. Give us leave to enjoy, in common with you, our king, our conſtitution, our country, our liberty, our ſtandards; we will ſuffer you in quiet to enjoy the excluſive poſſeſſion of the reſt.

You tell us that by our conduct "the breach is made irreparable †;" that the proſpect of our re-union with the Church, which "was on many accounts a delightful proſpect ‡," and with the hope of which our forefathers flattered themſelves, when ſhe ſhould by their means be reſtored to her former purity, has vaniſhed. But how? We ſtill adhere to the Confeſſion and Cate-

* Page 49. † Page 18. ‡ Page 9.

chiſms of the Church of Scotland, and we are ſtill *from principle* Preſbyterians; but—we have had the arrogance to call your ſtandards *ours*. And is this flying off from the church? is it not approaching nearer than, in your opinion, is conſiſtent with good manners? Truly, Sir, our hopes of re-union are not ſo high as were thoſe of the firſt Seceders. The experience of ſixty years has convinced us that they were too ſanguine in their expectations of the reformation of the church. Thoſe who, like Dr Porteous, either are or affect to be thought orthodox, think "thoſe modes of government to which we are habituated too democratical*," and condemn that liberty of the people to elect their own paſtors, which we have been accuſtomed to conſider as the fundamental article of the Seceſſion. Beſides, to uſe your own language, "a ſpirit appears to be riſing, which threatens a more complete, and even an everlaſting ſeparation†:" Act follows act of Aſſembly to prevent the poſſibility of the return of Diſſenters to her communion. We find every pulpit locked againſt even our occaſional entrance; and if, in our old age, after we have ſtudied with diligence, and preached with acceptance to "our own little ſocieties," we ſhould wiſh to end our days in the lap of our mother, we muſt return to the divinity-hall, and retrace every ſtep of our progreſs towards the miniſtry. As we approach, you fly off. We have ſtyled your ſtandards thoſe of our Synod; you deny by your acts that we have any relation to you.—Be it ſo, ſince you will have it. "The moderation of latter times," from which you had hoped ſo much, muſt be much increaſed, or rather much diminiſhed, before we can either hope, or wiſh for a re-union: increaſed, in reſpect of liberality and candour in judging of Diſſenters, if in

* Page 4. † Page 9.

you we have a fair ſpecimen of the Eſtabliſhed Church; diminiſhed, in reſpect of indifference whether their religious opinions harmonize with their ſtandards. We muſt have no Arminianiſing doctors in the church, when we return to her communion; we muſt have no clergymen to whom, even in the preſent relaxed ſtate of our diſcipline, we would refuſe, on account of what we deem immorality, admiſſion even as private members to the fellowſhip of the church.

But what are theſe ſtandards which you inſiſt are yours, and which we dare to call our own? I cannot miſtake you, for you enumerate them, and your enumeration ſurpriſes me. They are, "The Confeſſion of Faith, the Larger Catechiſm*."—Agreed: theſe are your ſtandards; and they are part of the ſtandards of *this* Synod. You add, "The national Covenant, and the Solemn League and Covenant."—Surely, Sir, you miſtake: theſe are part of our, but not of your ſtandards. Are theſe covenants at preſent aſſented to and ſubſcribed by intrants into the Eſtabliſhed Church? Did you aſſent to them when you obtained licenſe? or do you now believe them obligatory, *in any ſenſe?* Were they the ſtandards of the church, when Ebenezer Erſkine ſeceded from it? Or were they ever in the Formula of the Church of Scotland ſince the Revolution? I know you dare not anſwer theſe queſtions in the affirmative. How then happens it that ſo accurate a writer, ſo expert a grammarian and logician, includes them all when he ſays, that "theſe books were retained by the Seceſſion when they ſeparated †," and that they cannot be even "explained, but by the authority which made them obligatory, which exiſted prior to the exiſtence of this Synod ‡." Were we to throw out the queſ-

* Page 43. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

tion reſpecting the Covenants entirely, which we have never propoſed to do, what would be the conſequence? This would not widen the breach between us and the Church; it would bring us ſo much nearer to her, for in that caſe, our Formula would differ leſs than it does at preſent from hers. Nor would it not make us leſs genuine Seceders. The queſtion reſpecting them was not in the formula of the church in which the firſt Seceders would have lived and died, had not other conſiderations driven them from her. It was never aſſigned by the original Seceders, as one of the grounds of their Seceſſion, that an aſſent to their obligation was not demanded of intrants. It was not even in their own formula for ſeveral years after the Seceſſion commenced. The Covenants could not, then, be "fundamental articles of our confederation *;" nor could the omiſſion of the queſtion reſpecting them, which we never propoſed, far leſs the latitude of interpretation, which in this inſtance we have authoriſed, occaſion "the diſſolution of the ſociety †."

You enliven your remarks on the manner in which we ſpeak of our ſtandards, with obſervations truly ingenious. Theſe are partly grammatical, and partly moral. You ought, in pity to us, as a Synod of illiterate men, to have ſpared your grammatical remarks on our ſtyle. It may be, ſince *you* ſay it, that the expreſſion "ſtandard-books ‡," "is new and not very accurate;" and we acknowledge that we ſtand not ſo high in the literary world, as to have a right to coin new phraſes, even for our own uſe. We had proceeded on the ſuppoſition, that "ſtandard books" was as claſſical an expreſſion as ſtandard gold, ſtandard ſilver, ſtandard weights, ſtandard meaſures, which occur in good au-

* Page 49. † Ibid. ‡ Page 48.

thors; and our heads were not ſo full of metaphyſics, as to be able to ſee how, if the *books* are our ſtandards, as you allow, it was inaccurate to call them our ſtandard *books*. But ſurely, Sir, this remark was dictated by ſome nobler motive than the idle vanity of ſhowing the Seceders, and the public, your grammatical ſkill. Was it your purpoſe to ſhow that we are not true Seceders, not friends to legal eſtabliſhments, not loyal citizens, becauſe, in your opinion, we are not claſſical writers? Or did it proceed merely from an impotence of reſentment, which induced you to perſecute our very grammar?

I would have diſdained to take any notice of this little, abſurd, malevolent criticiſm, had it not been for remarks of another kind which you have connected with it. You ſagely remark, that "the book is not the ſtandard, but the doctrine contained in that book *."—Pray, whether do you mean, by ſaying that "the book is not the ſtandard," to contradict yourſelf, whoſe current language it is to ſtyle theſe books *our ſtandards*, or us who have preſumed to ſtyle them *our ſtandard books?* I deplore the caſe of the Seceders: you will gag them moſt effectually; for you reprobate their language as inaccurate, and, after you ſet them right, you will not permit them to adopt your own.

We thank you, Sir, for the information, that "the *book* is not the ſtandard, but the *doctrine* contained in that book †." Seceders, eſpecially thoſe of the modern ſtamp, are a ſtupid, and ſuperſtitious race! They have an exceſſive and abſurd veneration for their ſtandards! They always thought, till you undeceived them, that the *book*, as diſtinguiſhed from the doctrine wich it contains, that is to ſay, the paper of the book, the charac-

* Page 48. † Ibid.

ters of the book, not the doctrine taught by these characters impressed on that paper, was the standard! But "a standard which may be varied at pleasure," you assure us, "is nonsense*;" and as the doctrine contained in the Confession may be expressed in characters of various size, on paper of various fineness, and on pages of various lengths, we shall henceforth endeavour not to confound the *book* with the *doctrines* contained in that book!!!

It is pleasant to observe how you coil your argument about us, and with serpentine agility twist and untwist it, in the hope of crushing to death your ignoble prey. We have, according to you, too much, and, at the same time, too little attachment to the Confession of Faith. Now, we renounce it altogether; anon, we substitute it in the place of our Bible; and we are made by you to do the one or the other, as it suits your purpose. That you have charged us with renouncing it, every reader of your pamphlet knows; yet, with strange inconsistency, you charge us with making this book, which you say we have rejected, the ground and reason of our faith: for you say, "we see clearly what they mean by their standard books,—not the scriptures,—but the Confession of Faith, the larger Catechism, and the two Covenants †." Is this, Sir, or the sarcastic compliment which precedes it, worthy a man of your years and station? Is it so praise-worthy to attack the Seceders, that absurdity and self-contradiction will be justified by the patriotism of the design? or must we consider you in these opposite remarks as equally sincere or insincere?

You add, that "a standard that may varied *at pleasure* is nonsense ‡."—Yes, Sir, it is nonsense, if by "at pleasure," you mean the pleasure of every private individual of a society; but if by it you mean the pleasure

* Page 49. † Page 48. ‡ Page 49.

of the Society of which he is a member, it is found ſenſe. A ſtandard is what is appointed by the community to regulate the conduct of individuals in thoſe matters of which it is the ſtandard; the private individual is not at liberty to employ lighter weights or ſmaller meaſures than the ſtandard; nor to believe differently from the ſtandard *book*. But the authority which appointed the ſtandard, has right to alter it; and, in fact, the ſtandard in coin, in weights, in meaſures, has in all countries undergone alterations: Yea, in the reformed Church of Scotland herſelf, the ſtandard has been altered; or if you ſay it has not, pray tell me what were her ſtandards, before the year 1647, when ſhe adopted the Weſtminſter confeſſion? Yet I will not be ſo unjuſt to her as to ſay, what you have ſaid of the Aſſociate Synod; that her Aſſemblies, 1647—8, "as lords of the conſcience, altered the fundamental articles *" of the Church of Scotland.

Sir, the ſtandard books of the Seceſſion include, beſides thoſe you have enumerated, the Act, Declaration, and Teſtimony of the Aſſociate Preſbytery. To theſe ſtandard books we give different degrees of authority; but to none of them an authority above, or equal to the ſcriptures. Our candidates muſt approve of the Teſtimony "as a neceſſary and ſeaſonable appearance for reformation in a ſtate of Seceſſion," and muſt "reſolve to proſecute the ends of ſaid teſtimony †" Approving thus far, and reſolving thus far, they conform to the ſtandard, though, in many inferior articles, they diſapprove of what is contained in the teſtimony. To the confeſſion and catechiſms, and to the covenants, we give a higher authority. The whole doctrine of the firſt muſt be believed, the whole matter of the ſecond accounted obligatory; and unleſs the Synod, whoſe ſtandards they

* Page 49. † See formula.

are, give public ſanction to a looſer interpretation of any particular article, all muſt be believed according to the natural grammatical meaning of the terms which the compilers employ: But theſe we ſtyle, in our own language, our *ſubordinate* ſtandards, becauſe we conſider them as having an authority inferior and ſubordinate to the great, infallible, and only unalterable ſtandard, the holy ſcriptures. We make them not the rule of our faith, but our authoriſed interpretation of that rule. They are not the *regula regulans*, but the *regula regulata*; and we only demand of thoſe with whom we aſſociate, that they agree with us in the views expreſſed in theſe books of the meaning of the common ſtandard of Chriſtian faith.

It ſeems, however, that your views of our ſtandards are much higher than thoſe of Seceders, either ancient or modern. You deem them unalterable. You are of opinion that they ought to remain inviolable, whatever be the ſentiments of thoſe who aſſent to them or ſubſcribe them; for you condemn every attempt to "bend them to the preſent opinions *" of thoſe who profeſs to believe them. Strange theology, and ſtrange morality, for a doctor of divinity! You exalt the confeſſion to an equality with the ſcriptures, in this reſpect at leaſt, that it is a ſtandard as unalterable as the ſcriptures; yet you deem it unneceſſary that this ſtandard ſhould harmonize with the preſent ſentiments of thoſe who ſubſcribe it! There is much of this morality in thoſe Eſtabliſhed Churches with which I am beſt acquainted:—let your profeſſion be uniform, be your private belief what it may; confeſſions are only articles of peace, which you may privately diſbelieve, but not publicly oppoſe; they are agreeable to ſcripture, or if they are not, though you ſubſcribe

* Page 45.

them, you are not bound to believe them any farther than you think them agreeable to it, and the fault is not yours who profeſs what you do not believe, but theirs who make this hypocriſy and perjury neceſſary! Had this *new light* been the light in which the miniſters of the Seceſſion viewed their aſſent to the Confeſſion of faith, they would never have propoſed, either to alter or explain it. But they have not yet imbibed, and I truſt never will imbibe the looſe morality of Arch-deacon Paley of the Church of England, or of Dr Lamont of the Church of Scotland, or of any other temporiſing Divine of either Eſtabliſhment. They believe the *whole* doctrine of the Confeſſion, according to its literal ſenſe. In one article only were they in doubt; this they wiſhed not to alter, but to be left looſe, or to be explained; but it ſeems, even to deſire explanation on one ſpeculative point, ſpeculative truly to them while they remain Seceders, is, in your opinion, hereſy, diſloyalty, ſedition.

This, however, is the gravelling point: the article in doubt is eſſential to the very exiſtence of civil ſociety, and doubt reſpecting it can proceed from nothing but diſſatisfaction with the preſent conſtitution and government of Britain. A little leiſure, however, Sir, before you conclude ſo decidedly againſt us.

What although we had even *denied* to the civil magiſtrate all the power given him in matters of religion in the Weſtminſter Confeſſion of faith? Our ſupreme magiſtrate has renounced the only part of that power concerning which we ever heſitated. He tolerates every ſyſtem of faith, and every mode of Chriſtian worſhip, which is deemed conſiſtent with public peace, and good order. He has denied himſelf the power of dictating, in matters of conſcience, to the ſubjects of the realm.

He compels no man to be of the religion of the ſtate; and many opinions and practices which the reigning power muſt, and which we do judge, to be "contrary to the power of godlineſs, and deſtructive to the external peace and order which Chriſt hath eſtabliſhed in the church," are not only permitted, but expreſsly tolerated by him. He has not authority, and, limited as the executive power is in our happy conſtitution by the exiſting law, it is not his duty to take order, except within the pale of the national Church, that unity be preſerved, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blaſphemies * and hereſies be ſuppreſſed, that all corruptions and abuſes in worſhip and diſcipline be prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly ſettled, adminiſtered and obſerved †. Perſons who publiſh ſuch opinions, or maintain ſuch practices, muſt account to God for their conduct, but they cannot at preſent be called to account by any magiſtrate in Britain. Yea, within the national Church, the magiſtrate's power is limited; and you know that the cenſures of Church-courts on heretics or ſchiſmatics cannot be enforced by civil pains and penalties ‡. Suppoſing then, that we had denied him this power, where is the ſedition or diſloyalty of our denial? We would, in that caſe, only have conformed our opinions on the abſtract

* I except atheiſts, blaſphemers of the holy Trinity, Unitarians, and the like, who are not tolerated in Britain.

† Conſult Weſtminſter Confeſſion, chap. xx. ſect. 4. and chap. xxiii. ſect. 3.

‡ For the accuracy of this ſtatement, I refer to "the doctrine of toleration applied to the preſent times, a ſermon by William Porteous, one of the miniſters of Glaſgow," printed 1778. He defines the toleration introduced by King William, "A toleration of all ſects, opinions, and modes of worſhip which are not dangerous to the ſtate, or to particular perſons," and afterwards enumerates the exceptions, pp. 10, 11.

queſtion of his power, to the doctrine of the law of Britain, and to the power which by our happy conſtitution he actually enjoys. Whether, think you, is it liker ſedition, to inſiſt, with you, that the magiſtrate ſhould have a power which the law denies him, or to deny him a power to go beyond the law?

The doctrine of the magiſtrate's power in matters of religion, as ſtated in the Confeſſion of Faith, has no relation to loyalty or diſloyalty to the preſent king, or the preſent conſtitution of Britain. The Confeſſion was compiled before the acceſſion of the family of Hanover; before the exiſtence of the preſent conſtitution, as ſettled by the Revolution; yea, it was compiled by an Aſſembly authoriſed by a Parliament which in the king's name waged war againſt the king's perſon, and which was hoſtile to government by kings. Accordingly, and it deſerves to be remarked, the title "*king*" is induſtriouſly avoided by the Weſtminſter Aſſembly; they never once employ it when ſpeaking of the civil magiſtrate. The doctrine of the Confeſſion reſpects the power of the magiſtrate in general, without relation to any form of government; and had the preſent king, and the preſent government, no other teſt of loyalty than the ſubſcription of this Confeſſion, they would have no ſecurity whatever of the ſubjects. Every perſon who is not a madman believes that there muſt be government, and muſt be magiſtrates; and that theſe magiſtrates muſt have power to enforce the laws: but though he ſhould ſubſcribe the Confeſſion, he is ſtill at liberty to believe that this is the power of thoſe magiſtrates, under that form of government, democratical, ariſtocratical, or monarchical, which he approves. A ſimple oath of allegiance to the preſent government is unſpeakably greater ſecurity than the belief in general, that *the* civil

magiſtrate has all the power which is aſſerted in the Confeſſion of faith to belong to him.

It muſt be evident then, that the queſtion reſpecting the extent of the magiſtrate's power in matters of religion, as connected with the doctrine on this ſubject taught in our ſtandards, has no relation to the government of Britain, or to the power of our preſent ſupreme magiſtrate. It is an abſtract queſtion reſpecting the rights of *the* magiſtrate to interfere with the religious ſentiments of the ſubject, and to compel men to be of the religious profeſſion of the ſtate; and it equally refers to the heathen and the Chriſtian magiſtrate, in Britain or in any other country, whatever be the form of the government, or whatever the deſignation by which he is known. But it would not have ſuited your purpoſe to conſider it in this juſt point of view. You were determined at all hazards to find us ſeditious; and as you could not produce either words or facts to make good your charge, your genius, peculiarly fitted for miſrepreſentation, finds us ſeditious, becauſe we heſitate to ſay on which ſide of an abſtract queſtion the truth lies. Truly, Sir, you are a dog of moſt exquiſite noſe. You can detect ſedition, even when adhering to the thin edge of a metaphyſical queſtion.

You profeſs, I obſerve, your difficulty to "believe, that the Synod have read the Confeſſion of faith and Catechiſms; becauſe, otherwiſe, they would not have inſinuated, that the framers of theſe entertained any opinions inconſiſtent with the ſpiritual nature of Chriſt's kingdom *." I am not ſurpriſed at this. It is difficult for you to believe, that the Aſſociate Synod have either religion, learning, or common ſenſe; that they think civil government of any kind neceſſary; or would ſtar-

* Page 36.

tle at holding religious fellowſhip with atheiſts *. But permit me to inform you, that it has not yet become a cuſtom in *our* Synod, either to ſubſcribe Confeſſions which we have not read, or to profeſs doctrines which we do not believe.

Whether the Aſſociate Synod have ever "insinuated, that the framers of the Confeſſion entertained opinions inconſiſtent with the ſpiritual nature of Chriſt's kingdom," I muſt leave to be determined by yourſelf. Your ſagacity at finding myſtical meanings in the words of Burgher Seceders, is confeſſedly ſuperior to mine. All that I know of the matter is, that they have never ſaid ſo. They have not even ſaid, what is the direct meaning of our ſtandards on the controverted points; far leſs have they preſumed, after attaching an offenſive meaning to their words, to condemn their doctrine as falſe. They have only ſaid that ſome expreſſions in theſe books "have been interpreted, as favouring compulſory meaſures in religion;" that ſome people have conſidered their doctrine of the magiſtrate's power in matters of religion as a blending of church and ſtate together, as giving to the magiſtrate a lordſhip over the conſciences of men, as entitling him to oblige church-courts to accept of *his* interpretation of the ſcriptures, and as authoriſing intolerance, and perſecution.

It is not my buſineſs to ſay whether theſe interpreters are candid and impartial, or whether their comments are forced and unnatural, originating, like the famed commentaries of William Porteous, D. D. in prejudice and hoſtility to the compilers. I have only to remark, that, if theſe comments on our ſtandards be juſt, their doctrine, authoriſing compulſion and perſecution, ought not to be made a term of miniſterial communion in

* Page 43.

any Chriſtian ſociety; but that if on the other hand they be falſe, and our ſtandards teach no ſuch doctrine, they have ſuſtained no injury by the Synod's Preamble, and the Aſſociate Synod only deſerves to be cenſured for ſtooping ſo far as to give relief to perſons ſo weak as to be ſtaggered by charges perfectly groundleſs.

Your criticiſm on the words of our Preamble, "ſome parts of the ſtandard books of this Synod have been interpreted," is a maſterpiece; and I dare not deface it by any additional remarks. On the fact itſelf, however, that the alleged interpretation has been put on them, I may be permitted to ſpeak. But why ſhould I? Are *you* ignorant that they have been thus interpreted? Of interpreters among the Burgher Seceders, I need not ſpeak: they cannot write grammar, and muſt be ill qualified for the buſineſs of interpretation. Nor will I inſult you, by ſuppoſing you ſo ignorant of the theological diſputes which have been agitated in your own country, as to need to be informed, that writers of the Eſtabliſhed Churches both of Scotland and England, of the Relief, of the Antiburghers, of the Independents, of the Baptiſts *, have more than inſinuated, that our ſtandards teach doctrine inconſiſtent with the ſpiritual nature of Chriſt's kingdom, and authoriſing compulſory, and perſecuting principles in religion. The fact is notorious; and if you argue conſiſtently, you muſt of courſe involve them all in the charge of ſedition brought againſt the Aſſociate Synod, unleſs you are able to prove, that that is ſeditious in a Burgher Seceder, which is ſeditious in no other man. Others may condemn the doctrine of the Confeſſion on this point, and be innocent: A Burgher Seceder dares not even doubt concerning it, or aſk an authoriſed explanation of its meaning, without appearing in your eyes diſloyal.

Your antipathy to us has carried you farther than prudence would lead any man. You have by fair conſequence implicated in the charge of ſedition, a very large proportion of the beſt informed, the moſt virtuous and loyal of his majeſty's ſubjects: The whole Antiburgher Synod; for they have objected to the doctrine of the magiſtrate's power taught in the Confeſſion: The whole Relief Synod; for they are the avowed friends of toleration, and ſeveral of their members have on this account written againſt the covenants: The whole of the Scotch Independents, Baptiſts, and members of the Union Church; for they make not ſubſcription of the Confeſſion a term of communion, they particularly object to its doctrine on the connection betwixt Church and State, and they expreſs their marked diſapprobation of the covenants as an obligation to *extirpate by civil pains* perſons of their deſcription. Yea, almoſt all Diſſenters of every deſcription in Britain, are found wanting, when tried by your touchſtone of loyalty. None can be conſidered as loyal, but the people ſtyled, the Reformed, or Antigovernment Preſbytery, whoſe views of toleration and of the Solemn League, quadrate exactly with your own. Why you have been ſilent reſpecting the principles of thoſe ſocieties, and have only accuſed the Burgher Seceders, it muſt be difficult to explain. Have you private reaſons for peculiar antipathy to them? Or are you more afraid of them than of any other claſs of Scotch Diſſenters, becauſe they are more numerous? Or was it mere accident which led you firſt to faſten upon them? in conſequence of which, you muſt, like a truſty maſtiff, hold them faſt, till you have them ſecured, before you dare to make a ſpring at any other denomination of ſectarians.

I truſt, Sir, other Diſſenters will be on their guard. You have firſt attacked us; but it is difficult to ſay, which

of them ſhall be your next prey. You are their common enemy. You count them all diſloyal. They need not aſſert the contrary; you will ſtyle it "cant." They need not recommend loyalty; you will only be the more irritated at their preſumption and hypocriſy. If they ever preſume to have any controverſy among themſelves, reſpecting their terms of communion, you will, with jealous eye, watch their motions; you will record their private hiſtory with malignant induſtry; you will wait for the favourable moment; you will ſpring from your ambuſh; you will raiſe the war-whoop of loyalty, and call on the magiſtrate to "ſuppreſs their controverſy *by the hand of power* *." Their only conſolation, beſides what is derived from a good conſcience, will be, that they enjoy, through the bleſſing of God, a civil conſtitution which protects diſſenters, and civil governors, who are too enlightened to pay attention to croaking ſycophants, who hope to recommend themſelves by calumniating others.

I ſhould now have put an end to the irkſome buſineſs of purſuing you through the mazes of your inconſiſtency, illiberality, and malevolence, were I not aware, that you would boaſt that much of your pamphlet ſtill remains unanſwered. This conſiſts of criticiſms on the language of our proceedings, and of general deductions from theſe criticiſms, in proof of your favourite charge of diſloyalty.

You have ſmelt treaſon in every part of our proceedings. Our ill-fated ſketch of an act of forbearance, which was rejected by the Synod, has been raiſed by you from its grave, and its carcaſe treated with unmerited indignity. Its final rejection has not been able to af-

* Page 54.

ſuage your wrath. Every thing bad you find in it; and its bad things are not aſcribed, ſuch is your candour, to the Committee who framed it, but to the Synod who *refuſed* to paſs it into an act. I reſpect the aſhes of the dead: permit me, therefore, to examine the charges which you bring againſt this work of our Committee, before I admit them to be juſt.

Still ſcared with viſions of ſedition and revolution, you find this overture big with danger both to Church and State. Its hoſtile aſpect to the Eſtabliſhed Church, you prove thus: "By thus ſubſtituting an act of their own, made, or to be made, in the room of the acts of the General Aſſembly, 1647 and 1648; the Aſſociate Synod *undoubtedly* intended to throw off, in the moſt public manner, all connection with the Church of Scotland, to renounce all relation to her, with all hopes of her reformation, and to make a return to her communion impoſſible, whatever change of circumſtances might lead to it *."

Of our hopes of the reformation of the Church of Scotland, and of the obſtructions, on her part and on ours, to a re-union with her, I have already ſaid enough. Your *undoubted* proof of our hoſtility to her, derived from the overture of our Committee, is the ſubject of my preſent conſideration. An undoubted proof muſt be an undoubted fact, which directly and undoubtedly eſtabliſhes the preciſe crime which has been charged. Your proof, however, is wofully deficient in every thing neceſſary to conſtitute evidence. For firſt, it is not a matter of fact; and ſecondly, though it had been an undoubted fact, it is totally irrelevant to the charge.

It is not a matter of fact; it is falſe that "we have ſubſtituted an act of our own, made, or to be made, in

* Page 19.

the room of the acts of the General Aſſembly 1647 and 1648." My evidence of the falſehood of your charge is the very firſt ſentence of the overture againſt which you bring it. Its words are theſe: "The Aſſociate Synod hereby declare their attachment to the doctrine of the Weſtminſter Confeſſion of Faith, and Catechiſms larger and ſhorter, which were adopted by the General Aſſembly of the Church of Scotland, in the year 1647 and 1648." It is true, that the ſketch of a new formula, which the Committee preſented along with this overture, propoſed to ſubſtitute, inſtead of the words, "By the acts of the General Aſſembly 1647 and 1648," theſe words, "By the act of the Aſſociate Synod 17— ;" but it is as true that theſe words referred to the overture, and were meant to be filled up with the date of the enactment of that overture into a law. By the overture, the ſame reference was made to theſe acts of Aſſembly, but the place of that reference was changed.

But let us ſuppoſe that the Committee, yea, that the Synod, had omitted all particular reference to theſe acts of Aſſembly, I beg leave to aſk how you would infer from this, that we had "thrown off all connection with the Church of Scotland?" We would only in that caſe have followed the example of your own church, in whoſe formula there is no reference to theſe acts. The Weſtminſter Confeſſion, you know, although it ſerved your purpoſe to conceal it, is not the confeſſion of your church, as ratified either by acts of Parliament or acts of Aſſembly in 1647 and 1648; but as ratified in the ſecond ſeſſion of the Revolution Parliament, Act v. June 7. 1690, and frequently confirmed by divers acts of Parliament ſince that time *. The Aſſembly which met ſoon after, in the year 1690, had not courage even to *quote* thoſe acts

* See the preſent formula of the Church of Scotland.

of Aſſembly or Parliament in their act, ordering "all intrants into the miniſtry, and all other miniſters and elders," to ſubſcribe their approbation of the Weſtminſter Confeſſion. They could have indeed taken no notice of thoſe acts of Parliament, becauſe they had been reſcinded, and had ceaſed to be law. They were not under the ſame reſtraint reſpecting thoſe acts of Aſſembly; yet, "inſtead of building on the authority of the Aſſemblies 1647 and 1648 *," as you ſay the Seceſſion ought to build, they venture only to ſay, "Approven by the General Aſſemblies of this national Church †."

Now, Sir, ſeeing the Church of Scotland ſubſcribes the Weſtminſter Confeſſion "as approven by *the* General Aſſemblies of *this* national church, and ratified by law in the year 1690," without any direct reference to the acts of Aſſembly 1647 and 1648; and ſeeing, on the other hand, the Seceſſion at firſt made no reference at all to acts either of Parliament or Aſſembly in 1690, but received the Confeſſion merely "as the ſaid Confeſſion and Catechiſms were received and approven by the acts of the General Aſſembly 1647 and 1648;" it will be kind to inform the public how much further than formerly the Seceſſion would have been removed from the Eſtabliſhed Church, had our Synod, as their Committee propoſed, ſanctioned the Confeſſion by an act of their own, which explicitly referred to its ratification by the Aſſembly 1647 and 1648. To aſcertain ſo nice a point would far exceed my abilities; but perhaps the powers of a man who has acquired fame, by aſcertaining with mathematical preciſion the exact *ſtarving-point* ‡, may be equal to the taſk.

I ſee, however, one obvious reaſon for your predilection for the acts of the General Aſſemblies of that period.

* Page 20. † Formula of the Church of Scotland.

‡ Is there nobody in Glaſgow who underſtands me?

You are preciſely of their ſentiments on the ſubject of uniformity and perſecution; and, had you any hope of gaining over the preſent Aſſemblies of the church to your views, you would be the firſt to move them "to ſupplicate his Majeſty's high Commiſſioner, and the honourable Eſtates of Parliament," as one of theſe Aſſemblies did, "by their authority to ratify and enjoin the "ſame (the Confeſſion of Faith and Covenant) *under all* "*civil pains*, which will tend to the glory of God, pre-"ſervation of religion, the King's majeſty's honour, and "*perfect peace* of this Kirk and kingdom *." You would rouſe the dormant zeal of King and Parliament for the *excluſive* right of the miniſters of the National Church to preach and adminiſter the ſacraments †. You would demonſtrate to them the ſinfulneſs, or, which is much the ſame, the impolicy of toleration. You would labour to convince them that theological controverſies neceſſarily follow on the exiſtence of ſects; and that, as you meekly expreſs your views, theſe "controverſies ought to be ſuppreſſed by *the hand of power* ‡." The diſſenters of all deſcriptions will rejoice with me, that there are few doctors, beſides yourſelf, who would give to our governors ſuch advice, and that, though the *odium theologicum* ſhould induce many to give it, they are too enlightened not to deſpiſe the bigots who ſhould preſume to offer it.

* See act of Aſſembly printed before the National Covenant; and act of Parliament, granting *the civil pains* for which they ſo earneſtly ſupplicated.

† "It," *viz.* the legal toleration, "does not tolerate the adminiſtration of the ſacraments by *Preſbyterian* diſſenters from the Church of Scotland." Sermon on the doctrine of Toleration, by William Porteous, one of the miniſters of Glaſgow, 1778. page 11.

‡ New Light Examined, page 54.

In the preſent age, perſecution would refreſh few hearts but your own.

Your other charge againſt the overture of our Committee is, that it manifeſts our hoſtility to the State. The ſentence on which you found this, runs thus; "At the ſame time hereby declaring, That though they wiſh to fear God, and honour the king, and conſider ſubjection to the powers that are as an important duty incumbent on all men; yet," &c. The words quoted furniſh you with three *undoubted* proofs of our diſloyalty, on which you comment with much eloquence, much ſophiſtry, and much illiberality. Your firſt proof is founded on the word *wiſh*, the ſecond on the word *ſubjection*, and the third on the omiſſion of the word *conſcience*. Your criticiſms are too valuable to be overlooked; their ingenuity will delight, their candour charm the public!

I begin with what you reckon your *chef d'œuvre* in criticiſm. "They *wiſh* to honour the king—if they did honour him, they would not have expreſſed themſelves in this manner; at leaſt, any perſon of the moſt ſeditious principles may employ theſe terms *."

You have ſo decidedly ſhown elſewhere, that the Aſſociate Synod can neither ſelect the beſt phraſes for expreſſing their meaning, nor compoſe a ſentence which is not ungrammatical in its conſtruction, that it will be prudent in me not to preſume to affirm, that the Committee have choſen the moſt appropriate word for conveying their meaning. But I may venture, perhaps, to aſk your *Critical Acuteneſs*, whether it ever occurred to you, that the Committee intended the word *honour* to be, not in the infinitive, but in the indicative mood; and that they meant to ſay, "though they wiſh to fear God,

* Page 34.

and *honour* [or *do* honour] the king, and [as a proof that they *do* honour him] conſider ſubjection to the powers that are as an important duty incumbent on all men." This would indeed have been too liberal a comment to have ſuited your temper; and too near the ſurface to have occurred to a genius, which can diſcover no meanings, but ſuch as are beyond the reach of common underſtandings.

I ſhall, however, for the ſake of the argument, admit that our Committee meant only to ſay that they *wiſh* to fear God, and *wiſh to* honour the king. Your criticiſm, in this view of their meaning, is perhaps unexampled for piety, for charity, and for philoſophical accuracy.

Its piety is ſingular. A wiſh, a ſimple, flat *wiſh* to fear God rouſes not your zeal, gives you no offence; but a mere *wiſh* to honour the king is with you an unpardonable crime.—Why, Sir, ſhould you compel me to ſay, that you are more anxious to be thought loyal, than pious? Almoſt every other doctor in the church, will think it abundant proof of our loyalty, if our wiſhes are as ardent for the honour of our earthly as of our heavenly Sovereign; perhaps many of them would excuſe us, although our expreſſions were a little warmer, in reſpect to the fear which we owe to God, than the honour we owe to the king.

Its charity is as ſingular; and furniſhes one of the many proofs of that "increaſing moderation of latter times," which you have celebrated. "If they did honour the king, they would not have expreſſed themſelves in this manner,—they *wiſh* to honour him *." But they have only ſaid that they *wiſh* to fear God; it follows, in your liberal and charitable mind, that "if they did" *fear* "him, they would not have expreſſed them-

* Page 34.

ſelves in this manner." If your remark have any meaning at all, it muſt be, that in your conviction, the Aſſociate Synod neither fear God, nor regard man, are as deſtitute of piety as they are of loyalty, and are not only democrats, but atheiſts *.

The philoſophical accuracy of your criticiſm is equally ſingular: "Any perſon of the moſt ſeditious principles may employ theſe terms †," may ſay ſincerely that he *wiſhes* to honour the king. I thought that, according to the doctrines which you teach, or permit to be taught in your pulpit, ſincere endeavours, and wiſhes are accepted by God, in place of perfect obedience, which is now impracticable. If you accept of wiſhes to be religious, as a proof of religion, might you not, merciful Doctor! accept, for once at leaſt, and in the caſe of perſons of very limited powers, of wiſhes to be loyal as a proof of loyalty? Or are you ſo ſtern and unpitying, as to demand of your friends higher proofs, ſtronger expreſſions, of their loyalty, than you deem neceſſary or proper of their religion? You tolerate low degrees of religion, providing it be found within the Eſtabliſhed Church; you can tolerate nothing but warm and fervent loyalty, and even this, if found among diſſenters, you perſecute as *cant* and hypocriſy.—But I had almoſt forgotten your new philoſophical light. I know not to what ſchool you belong; but I find that ſome of the fundamental tenets of your philoſophy are, that a man's principles are neceſſarily the oppoſite of what he wiſhes them to be; that bad men wiſh to be good men, bad ſubjects, yea the moſt deſperate rebels to the beſt of kings, wiſh themſelves to be good ſubjects; and that, if

* The Doctor inſinuates, page 49. that we would have no great objection to admit either of theſe claſſes of perſons into our communion.

† Page 34.

a man *wiſhes* to be loyal, he muſt of courſe be marked down as a democrat, a ſeditious perſon, a rebel. A man would not ſay that he wiſhed, or deſired to honour his king, if he really honoured him ! ! !

It is ſingularly unfortunate, that our Committee have excited in your breaſt ſo ſerious an alarm reſpecting their political principles, by a clauſe in their overture, which would not have been inſerted at all, had it not been from a wiſh to prevent the poſſibility of aſcribing their conduct, in giving liberty to their miniſters and elders to think for themſelves on the ſubject of toleration, to any want of loyalty, or any deſire for political change. Their loyalty was known and acknowledged. But conſidering the complexion of the times, and the danger of having their conduct aſcribed to falſe motives, they guarded the overture by an expreſs avowal of their loyalty. They had always formerly acted as good and dutiful ſubjects; and they wiſhed it to be underſtood, that in this inſtance they meant nothing in oppoſition to the honour due to the king. They affirmed, therefore, that they conſidered ſubjection to the powers that are, as a duty incumbent upon all men.

Your ſecond proof of our ſeditious views is, if poſſible, ſtill more abſurd than the firſt. It is grounded on what our Committee ſay, that they "conſider ſubjection to the powers that are, as an important duty incumbent on all men." Theſe you ſtyle "cautious and ambiguous words *." You find that the particular uſe of the word *ſubjection*, in one paſſage of the Confeſſion of Faith, limits its meaning, in that place, to *one* part of the duty of people to their magiſtrates; you conclude, in oppoſition to ſcripture, to the known and approved

* Page 35.

uſe of the words, and to common ſenſe, that it muſt always have as limited a meaning; and, according to your uſual manner of always taking our words by the wrong handle, you palm this on the Aſſociate Synod as the meaning which they undoubtedly intended. It is hard indeed for Seceders to have to deal with ſuch interpreters of their language;—with men who, like you, aſſume it as a firſt principle, that they always have a bad deſign in every thing they do, and in every thing they write, and who overſtrain their ingenuity to torture their expreſſions into ſedition or nonſenſe.

I decline entering into any grammatical diſcuſſion of the import of the words *ſubject* and *ſubjection*, for which, being a diſſenter, it is not to be ſuppoſed that I ſhould be qualified. My apology for the uſe of what you deem ſo ambiguous a term, is this, that if we erred in the choice of it, it was our Engliſh Bibles which led us aſtray. The Apoſtles Peter and Paul employ the terms as comprehenſive of the whole duty of people to their civil governors: "Let every ſoul be *ſubject* unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God.—Wherefore, ye muſt needs be *ſubject*, not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake *." This ſubjection Paul oppoſes to "reſiſting the power," and to "not being afraid of the power;" and the duties implied in this ſubjection he enumerates in the ſame paſſage: "Render *therefore* to all (namely magiſtrates) their dues; tribute, cuſtom, fear, honour." His language is uniform. "Put them in mind to be *ſubject* to principalities and powers †;" and Peter's language agrees with it, "*Submit* ‡ yourſelves

* Rom. xiii. 1,—7. † Tit. iii. 1.

‡ The ſmall difference between *ſubmitting* and *being ſubject* vaniſhes when the original is conſulted. Peter and Paul both uſe the verb υποτασσω.

to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's ſake; whether it be to the king as ſupreme, or unto governors as unto them that are ſent by him *."—I never bluſh, Sir, either for myſelf or for my brethren, when the ſtrictures on our language fall with equal ſeverity on the language of ſcripture; but I confeſs that I do bluſh when I find Doctors of divinity ignorant of their Bibles, diſſatisfied with the language which the inſpired writers employ, or diſpoſed to inſult the Spirit of God himſelf, rather than not ſpit their venom at thoſe whom they have reſolved to defame.

Your third proof of our ſeditious views is ſo ridiculous that I heſitate whether I ought to deign to give it any anſwer. We have not inſerted the word *conſcience* into this overture; we only ſaid, that we "conſider ſubjection to the powers that are, as an important duty incumbent on all men." "But this ſubjection," you ſay, "appears with a new aſpect; it is no longer profeſſed *as a matter of conſcience*; it is, however, an important duty †." The weakneſs and malignity of this criticiſm muſt ſtare every man broad in the face. If it have any ſenſe at all, it ſerves to exhibit your principles "with a new aſpect." It ſeems, according to you, that a thing may be, not only in itſelf, but in the view of a perſon, a duty, an important duty, a duty incumbent on him, yea a duty incumbent on all men, to which he is not bound "as a matter of conſcience!!!"—You have, Sir, gone quite beyond my depth, I ſuſpect even beyond your own. Pray, explain in your next edition your meaning. Show Seceders, for their inſtruction, what duties are matters of conſcience, and what duties may be either omitted or violated without ſubjecting the conſcience to guilt. Your condeſcenſion to our weakneſs will entitle you to the forgiveneſs of many injuries and inſults.

* 1 Pet. ii. 13. † Page 34.

There is yet another remark which you make on our perſecuted overture, which is only half expreſſed. It is on our declaring our *attachment* to the *doctrine* of the Weſtminſter Confeſſion of faith and Catechiſms; which I find by an inſinuation in your 9th page, you wiſh to reſtrict to what are uſually ſtyled the doctrines of the goſpel. For my part I know of nothing in the Weſtminſter Confeſſion of faith and Catechiſms beſides *doctrine*. There is doctrine in them reſpecting truths to be believed and duties to be practiſed; doctrine reſpecting the Church, and doctrine reſpecting the State; doctrine reſpecting the ordinances of religion, and doctrine reſpecting civil government, which in its origin is, as Paul ſtyles it, "the ordinance of God," and in its particular form, as Peter ſtyles it, "the ordinance of man." It is all doctrine from beginning to end.—If this, Sir, is not enough to ſatisfy you, I leave the diſpute to be ſettled betwixt you and the Church of which you are a member. She comprehends every thing in the Confeſſion under the word *doctrine*. For the Formula which you ſubſcribed runs thus: "Do you ſincerely own and believe the whole *doctrine* of the Confeſſion of faith, &c. And do you own the whole *doctrine* therein contained as the confeſſion of your faith."

Your principal remarks on the ſketch of a new Formula have been already noticed. A few, however, yet remain, to which I muſt pay ſome paſſing attention.

The myſtery contained in the article *the*, which was inſerted in the firſt queſtion, you have not condeſcended to explain; and I ſhall not attempt to unveil it. It is in your own Formula; and perhaps you were offended that Seceders ſhould pilfer even a particle, a *the*, from the Eſtabliſhed Church.

Your remarks on the ſecond queſtion have already been conſidered.

On the third queſtion you only ſay, "no alteration *;" and it is ſingularly unfortunate that even this ſlight remark ſhould be falſe. There are two alterations.

Your obſervations on the fourth queſtion are limited to one point; the Committee did not chuſe to inſert along with the phraſe "truths of Chriſt," the word *ordinances*—"the truths and ordinances of Chriſt." "It is evident," you ſay, "that the principal difference between the majority and minority reſpected the word *ordinances* †." "It will not immediately occur," you add, "why there ſhould be a debate, and a diviſion of the Committee, with reſpect to the admiſſion of this word *ordinances* ‡." You are ſo kind, however, as to unveil the myſtery: "They would not admit the terms *ordinances of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt* into the fourth queſtion of their Formula, *probably*, becauſe the word ordinance includes, and has been uſed to deſcribe, civil government ||."—In the courſe of my reading, I have met with few things ſo diſingenuous and unfair as this ſtatement, or ſo abſurdly wicked and malignant as the repreſentation you give of the motives of our conduct, and the concluſions which you deduce from it. If, after being ſo hackneyed in the low arts of miſrepreſentation and calumny, you are yet capable of a bluſh, you muſt redden in private at the conſciouſneſs of having deliberately violated truth and honour in this charge.

Permit me to ſay, Sir, that it is not evident, that it is evidently not true, that the *principal* difference between the majority and minority reſpected the word *ordinances*, or that there was *any* difference at all between them reſpecting this word. They divided on the ſub-

* Page 13. † Page 42. ‡ Ibid. || Page 27.

ject, whether they ſhould overture the fourth queſtion as it ſtands in the new Formula, or adopt an amendment, in which, among other words, the phraſe "ordinances of Chriſt" occurs, and which, if carried, would have thrown out the fourth queſtion in its preſent form altogether. Low as my opinion is of your candour, I can reſt in your own verdict, if you ſpeak in earneſt, on this point.

But, Sir, admitting that the word "ordinances" ought to have been inſerted in our formula, pleaſe inform the world, how you dared to aſcribe it to any cauſe at all, except inadvertence. Your eyes have not rolled ſo ſeldom, or ſo careleſsly, along the fourteen pages of our "Proceedings," againſt which you have written, as to permit me to ſuppoſe that you never obſerved this favourite word, in the ſecond of the interim queſtions. In the new formula, it was propoſed, among other things, to 'approve of the covenants as a ſolemn engagement, on the part of our fathers, to cleave to the *truths* of Chriſt;' in the interim queſtions, theſe covenants are ſaid to be 'a ſolemn engagement of adherence to the truths *and ordinances* of Chriſt, contained in his word.' The new formula was never enacted; the interim queſtions were law for a few months; but the abſence of the word 'ordinances' is imputed in the firſt caſe to ſedition, while the admiſſion of it in the ſecond caſe, is ſo far from being aſcribed to the returning loyalty of the Synod, that it is dexterouſly and diſingenuouſly kept by you entirely out of view. So low a trick to impoſe on the world, was unworthy of a man, who had any reputation to loſe.

Your *probable* reaſon why we would not admit a phraſe, which in fact we *did* admit, gives a ſtrange opening into your political views. They are not the views of any enlightened man; they are as hoſtile to ſcripture,

as they are to common ſenſe. Let the world hear: Dr Porteous is of the abſurd, and deſervedly exploded opinion, that dominion is founded on grace!!! Civil magiſtracy is one of the ordinances *of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*!!! And the Aſſociate Synod *probably* refuſed to admit the phraſe "ordinances *of Chriſt*," into their propoſed new formula, becauſe, according to him, this phraſe "includes, and has been uſed to deſcribe, civil government!!! *"

I do not pervert your words. What relation has the phraſe "ordinances *of Chriſt*," either to loyalty or to ſedition, if it include not civil magiſtracy as one of the ordinances which *Chriſt* has inſtituted? To ſay that "becauſe the word ordinance includes civil government," we had probably a ſeditious deſign in not uſing the phraſe, "ordinances *of Chriſt*," is ſtark, ſtaring nonſenſe, unleſs you believe that "the words ordinances of Chriſt, include, and have been uſed to deſcribe, civil government."

The Aſſociate Synod, Sir, are ſo far from having declared, as you very charitably inſinuate may be inferred from their omiſſion of this phraſe, "that the authority of the powers that are, and that civil government *itſelf*, is not a matter of fundamental importance; and that a perſon denying the lawfulneſs of *all* civil government may be admitted to miniſterial communion with them†;" that they would refuſe licenſe to any young man, who ſhould diſcover either ignorance or error, reſpecting the foundation of civil government, in any degree equal to yours. Our ideas on this ſubject correſpond with ſcripture and right reaſon. We believe that civil government is an ordinance *of God*; but we refuſe that it is any ordinance *of Chriſt*. The ordinances of Chriſt are appointed by him as head of the church, for ſpi-

* Page 27. † Page 43.

ritual purpoſes, and are lawfully adminiſtered, only by thoſe who bear rule in his church. The ordinance of civil government is appointed by the ſupreme Governor among the nations, for temporal purpoſes, and is adminiſtered by thoſe who bear rule in the ſtate. It is eſſential, not merely to the welfare, but to the exiſtence of civil ſociety; is divine in its original, though human in its particular forms; exiſted before Chriſt came, as well as ſince his manifeſtation; and is equally neceſſary for heathen, as for Chriſtian ſtates. "Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magiſtrate's juſt and legal authority, nor free the people from their due obedience to him."—Theſe are with us, not matters of doubtful diſputation, but of fundamental importance, with reſpect to civil government; and holding theſe as our principles, we conſider it as the ordinance of God, and pity the man's ignorance of the ſpiritual nature of Chriſt's kingdom, who conſiders it as an ordinance of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.

In our fifth queſtion, our Committee threw out the concluding words, "particularly thoſe errors which were vented by Profeſſors Simpſon and Campbell." This might have atoned, in your eyes, for ſeveral faults in other queſtions. It appears, however, from the notice you take of it, that even this gives you offence. We thought that ſixty years had been a ſufficient time for theſe two heretical profeſſors to have hung in chains; but if you inſiſt on our retaining ſome clauſe of this ſort, we ſhall, in our next edition of the formula, bury, with due honours, the ſcanty remains of theſe heretics, and ſubſtitute in their place a freſh ſubject, thus—"particularly thoſe calumnies which were vented by Dr Porteous."

The only additional remark which you make on our propoſed alterations of the formula, reſpects our "uni-

formly changing the word *promiſe* for the word *reſolve*;" from which you infer that "the ſecurity given to the people, that the doctrine contained in theſe articles is to be preached and taught by the ſubſcribers, is *at leaſt* weakened *." Every remark of yours is made with a double deſign; to impreſs our hearers, that we are men of no conſcience, and ought to be abandoned by them; and our country, that we are men of deteſtible political principles, and ought to be puniſhed. Your remark to which I at preſent advert, is decidedly made with this view.

But, in the firſt place, let me tell you a ſimple ſtory, on the ſubject of the word *reſolve*. In our old formula, the Committee remarked a want of uniformity of language;---that in two queſtions the word *reſolve* was employed, in three queſtions the word *promiſe*, in one the word *engage*, and in one both *promiſe* and *engage*. It occurred to them, that, in the judgment of the framers of the old formula, the three words, "reſolve," "promiſe," "engage," were of the ſame import, or at leaſt, that any of them ſufficiently expreſſed the ſincerity of the ſubſcriber, and his determination, through grace, to perform the duties expreſſed in the ſeveral queſtions. It was judged proper to make the language uniform; and the only queſtion was, which of theſe three words ſhall be retained. Shall *reſolve* be made *promiſe*, or *promiſe reſolve*, or both made *engage*? Take the firſt that occurs; that was *reſolve*, which appears in the ſecond queſtion before either of the others; the others were altered of courſe. Now, Sir, you find no fault with the old formula for uſing this word; it would not have ſuited your deſign to ſnarl at it: but what paſſes there, not only without cenſure, but with implied

* Page 43, 44.

approbation, becomes, in the new one, a grievous blemiſh, which ſets aſide the principal uſe of a formula, ſecurity to the people, that only certain doctrine ſhall be taught.

You ſhew the impropriety of the phraſe, by propoſing to put it in place of the word promiſe, in a ſecurity for our ſtipends. We have no objection. At preſent we have no ſecurity, of any kind, for our ſtipends *, except what ariſes from the conviction on the minds of our people, that it is their duty to ſupport, according to their ability, thoſe who labour among them; and we deſire no more. We are not ſuffered to want, while we do our duty, and our people have ability.—But what relation has this example to the caſe in hand? A bill or bond are good for nothing, if not expreſſed in legal form; and "reſolve" is not the phraſe which law requires. Yet the conſcience of the perſon who ſhould ſolemnly, and before witneſſes, declare his reſolution, to pay a particular ſum to another, would be bound by it; and the preſent is a tranſaction in which conſcience is directly engaged. Indeed the man who reſolves inſincerely, before God and the people, will promiſe, will ſubſcribe, will ſwear inſincerely; and it will, perhaps, require all your ingenuity to ſhew the difference, either in reſpect of obligation on the conſcience of the candidate, or in reſpect of ſecurity given to the people, between a promiſe, an engagement, and a reſolution to perform certain duties, if the promiſe, engagement, and reſolution, are made with equal publicity, and equal ſolemnity.

But you are determined, if poſſible, to prove us, in every point of view, a Synod of villains; and, therefore,

* Bonds have not been introduced into the Seceſſion; and our calls mention no particular ſum as ſtipend.

you not only aſſign the baſeſt motives for our conduct, in changing the word ‘ promiſe’ into ‘ reſolve,’ but you charge us as having, with the ſame villainous intention, “ limited even this by the following clauſe, *ſo far as you know your own heart* *,”—Sir, I ſpeak ſeriouſly when I charge you with committing, in this inſtance, a baſe and deliberate forgery upon our committee’s formula. The clauſe to which you refer is to be found in no queſtion of this formula in which the word “ reſolve” occurs, nor in any queſtion in which either a profeſſion of faith, or a reſolution to perform duty, is made. I appeal to it as it appears either in onr “ Proceeedings,” or in the mutilated ſtate in which you have produced it in your work. We queſtion our candidates, indeed, with reſpect to the purity of their motives in entering into the miniſtry, and we demand of them to tell us, ‘*ſo far as they know their own hearts*,’ whether they are induced to do ſo ‘ from zeal for the honour and glory of God, love to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and deſire of being inſtrumental in edifying and ſaving ſouls,’ or from ‘ any ſelfiſh views, or worldly deſigns or intereſt.’ The clauſe is here proper, and it occurs no where elſe. Yet you ſacrifice the ſmall remains of your character, by tranſpoſing it into places where it is impoſſible it could have been put without a villainous intention.—Where our committee put it, it demands of the candidate to ſpeak ſincerely of his motives; but you have placed it where it could only ſerve the purpoſe of giving room for inſincerity and mental reſervation.—It is not, Sir, *our* cuſtom to fabricate falſehood in order to prove other men deſtitute either of religion or of loyalty; nay, we are not yet able to think without deteſtation on thoſe who do ſo. We can, however, pity them, and pray for them, that the thoughts of their heart may be forgiven them.

* Page 43.

Yet let me conſider this clauſe as it ſtands where our Committee put it. Pray, what objection have you to make againſt it? Are you of opinion that candidates for the miniſtry ought not to be interrogated ſo cloſely reſpecting their motives for accepting, or perhaps I ſhould ſay, when I ſpeak of your church, for ſoliciting a charge? or ſuppoſing the queſtion proper, do you object to this clauſe 'ſo far as you know your own heart,' on the ground that it ought to be anſwered in the affirmative, without conſulting our own hearts at all on the buſineſs, or, in oppoſition to our conſciouſneſs of our private motives? Shall I infer from your objection that you could not, or would not have ſaid, when you entered into the function of the holy miniſtry, that, ſo far as you knew your own heart, your great motives and inducements were not any ſelfiſh views, or worldly deſigns or intereſt?

As I have occupied ſo much of my own time and yours ſo unpleaſantly to us both, in detecting your unfair quotations, illiberal inſinuations, and palpably abſurd and ſophiſtical deductions, I ſhall only take ſlight notice of your propoſitions reſpecting legal eſtabliſhments, and the power of the civil magiſtrate with reſpect to religion *. Both are intended for our inſtruction.

Every word which you have ſaid in your ſix propoſitions reſpecting the civil magiſtrate's right and duty to interfere in the encouragement of true religion, will, as far as I know the Aſſociate Synod, be aſſented to by *every one* of its members; and if the Confeſſion *really* give him no more power in matters of religion than you have given him in theſe propoſitions, there is not a man among them who will heſitate one moment to ſubſcribe it.

* Pages 24, and 25.

Your four propoſitions, however, reſpecting legal eſtabliſhments of religion * are not in all points ſo unexceptionable. The Aſſociate Synod will admit that legal eſtabliſhments are lawful and warrantable; this, though you have often inſinuated the contrary, they have never called in queſtion; and though there is no eſtabliſhed religion at preſent in the world, which they can in all points approve, they will not refuſe that ſome of them, and particularly the Eſtabliſhment in Scotland, has been in various reſpects uſeful. But that a legal eſtabliſhment is eſſentially neceſſary, or, to uſe your own words, that "where religion is not even known, humanly ſpeaking, it can never be reſtored or maintained, without a legal eſtabliſhment †," will not be ſo eaſily admitted. It involves too much abſurdity in it to be generally received by Seceders; they know the ſcriptures better than to admit a propoſition which ſo directly oppoſes them. It ſuppoſes that, ſince miracles have ceaſed, the truth has no ſufficient evidence to recommend itſelf to the world; and that the preaching of the goſpel can neither reſtore religion where the knowledge of it has been loſt, nor maintain religion where it is known, without the aid of temporal power. It ſuppoſes that, unleſs the age of miracles return, religion can never be introduced "where is is not even known," except by *firſt* getting it eſtabliſhed in theſe countries by law; and *then* the eſtabliſhed clergy, ſupported by the power of the ſtate, and employing arguments derived from the pleaſure the inhabitants will give to their civil governors by adopting the ſtate religion, and the honours and emoluments which they will obtain by their conformity, will begin and proſper in the work of converting the natives. A ſtrange view, I acknowledge, of the native excellence of

* Pages 21,---23. † Page 23.

the Chriſtian religion, and of the efficacy of the word when preached according to the will, and accompanied by the power of Chriſt. The Chriſtian religion muſt firſt be eſtabliſhed in Otaheite by the chiefs, and then we may hope that the eſtabliſhed clergy of the church of Otaheite will be able to convert the natives! Yet I find that you would not refuſe to countenance miſſions, "if ſuch inſtitutions were patronized by the legiſlature! They would be, in ſo far, a legal eſtabliſhment * !"

Your copious extracts from the Confeſſion of Faith, Larger Catechiſm, and the two Covenants, which occuppy your ſix following pages †, are made, as you tell us, "to exhibit a proof of our *good* diſpoſition towards the civil powers ‡;" and to prepare your way for ſhowing "what we have ſubſtituted in place of theſe fundamental maxims of order and civil government, which," you ſay, "are *now* excluded from the ſtandards of Burgher Seceders, under the deſcription of diſputable, and doubtful matters ‖."

Your deſign, in theſe quotations, it muſt be evident to every unprejudiced perſon, is of the moſt nefarious kind. You firſt identify the Aſſociate Synod, with their Committee. You ſecondly affirm, that they have actually done, what, to ſay the worſt of it, was only propoſed, and has been ſince rejected. You have, thirdly, collected almoſt every thing, which our ſtandards ſay on the ſubject of the magiſtrate's power, and the peoples duty, not in reſpect to religion only, but alſo to good morals, to public order, and to civil ſubjection. And laſtly, you charge us with having renounced "theſe *fundamental* maxims of order and civil government;" from which you infer "our *good* diſpoſition towards the civil powers."

* Page 23. † Page 27,---33. ‡ Page 27. ‖ Page 33.

It is difficult to make a ſerious reply to ſuch a charge. It is incredible. Do you yourſelf believe, that the Burgher Seceders are enemies to the "fundamental maxims of order and civil government?" or, as you expreſs it elſewhere, that they conſider "civil government *itſelf* as a matter of doubtful diſputation *," and would "admit a perſon, denying the lawfulneſs of *all* civil government, to miniſterial communion with them †." For ſhame! You would not have exhauſted your powers in writing a book againſt them, if you had believed them to be raving madmen; and in what light can they be conſidered but as perſons furiouſly inſane, if they are really enemies to the fundamental maxims of order, and conſider it as doubtful whether *any* civil government be lawful? Inſtead of writing againſt them to excite the government of their country to proſecute them as rebels, you would have recommended it to their friends to put them in cloſe confinement, or perhaps to their neighbours to hunt them down as wild beaſts. Or did you believe your countrymen to be ſuch gaping fools, as to believe that you could be actuated in bringing ſuch a charge, by any thing but the moſt inveterate enmity to the Burgher Seceſſion, and a deſperate determination either to ruin their character or your own? Were there ever men in any civilized country, who gave the uſual ſigns that they were in the poſſeſſion of their ſenſes, and yet held the principles which you impute to the Aſſociate Synod? Had you publiſhed travels in Tartary or any other country, the interior of which is little known, what liberties would you have taken when you run few riſks of detection? In what groteſque ſhapes would you have painted the inhabitants, what ſhocking principles, and what inhuman cuſtoms, would you have aſcribed to

* Page 43. † Ibid.

them! when you have dared, I ſay, *dared*, to lay ſuch things to the charge of perſons, who are ſcattered all over your native country, who are known to be ſober in their deportment, to be peaceable members of ſociety, and to poſſeſs the ordinary qualifications for the duties of their ſtation! who are known to fear an oath, to pay tribute, to obey magiſtrates, to love the conſtitution of their country, and in the face of thouſands regularly to pray for their king!

The *only* controverſy amongſt us and which gave riſe to the propoſal of altering, not the Confeſſion but our own formula, reſpected the alleged doctrine of our ſtandards on the ſubject of toleration. It was thought that our covenants oppoſed the toleration of any men in any of the three kingdoms, except Preſbyterians; and while we approved of them in general, and held them in a looſer ſenſe to be obligatory, we wiſhed that our approbation of them ſhould not be underſtood as binding ourſelves to *extirpate* by ſecular arms, perſons of other religious denominations, or as approving of the principle on which ſuch obligation to extirpate others proceeds. It was thought too, that the Weſtminiſter Confeſſion of faith, which was written at a time when the doctine of toleration was not underſtood, and by perſons whoſe other writings oppoſed this doctrine, gave, in the fourth ſection of the twentieth, and in the third ſection of the twenty-third chapter, a power to the civil magiſtrate "reſpecting, in regard to, or in matters of religion," which authoriſed him to compel men by *civil pains* to be of the religious profeſſion of the ſtate; and we wiſhed to have theſe ſections explained, or the belief of them, in this ſuppoſed view of their meaning, not made a term of miniſterial communion among us. This you certainly knew; for you had read at leaſt one page of our addreſs to the people under our charge! But this

was a thing ſo extremely innocent, that you could not, without condemning the law of your country, and contradicting your own celebrated ſermon on toleration, have found great fault with us. You, therefore, artfully quote, whatever the Confeſſion ſays on the doctrine of the magiſtrate's power, and the peoples duty, in things civil as well as ſacred, and argue againſt us, as if we had denied *every thing* you have quoted. Is this fair? is it honeſt? is it honourable?

You quote from the thirty-firſt chapter *, the right of the magiſtrate to call Synods, to be preſent at them, and to conſult with them about matters of religion.—But with what view? when was his right to do ſo called in queſtion by us? When he ſhall condeſcend to call us together, we will ſhow our principles by our cheerful obedience, and give on any ſubject he propoſes, our explicit ſentiments, or our beſt advice. We will honour and obey our magiſtrates; but we will, and they have permitted us, believe for ourſelves. In the mean time, the preſence of any magiſtrate at our meetings of Synod, would be an honour for which we would be grateful, and which would do us eſſential ſervice; it would enable us officially to contradict the calumnies of our enemies reſpecting our ſeditious deſigns.

With what deſign you quote † from the larger Catechiſm, the obligation of ſuperiors to ſee that the Sabbath be obſerved by all thoſe under their charge, I am unable to diſcover.—Do you mean to charge us with the neglect of this duty in the caſe of our own children and ſervants, or to inſinuate that we do not enjoin our people to ſanctify the Sabbath? Or do you wiſh to perſuade the world, that we think our civil ſuperiors are too rigid in enforcing the laws reſpecting the obſer-

* Page 30. † Ibid.

vation of the Lord's day, and that they have no right to puniſh its open profanation? As for ourſelves, we never dine with the patron, or any of the principal heritors on the afternoon of that day, nor amuſe ourſelves in the evening at cards. As for our civil ſuperiors, we would rejoice to obſerve them enforcing the good laws of the ſtate reſpecting the Sabbath with greater rigour; and will not begin to find fault with them, till they compel us or others to attend divine worſhip on that day in the pariſh-church.

You not only quote *, from the xxii. chapter of the Confeſſion, the right of the magiſtrate to impoſe, and the duty of the ſubject to take a lawful oath, but you employ more than a page againſt us † in proving the abſolute neceſſity of oaths for the ends of criminal and civil juſtice.—Do you then mean firſt to make us Quakers, who plead conſcience in refuſing an oath, and then to make Quakers on this account ſeditious? Or do you wiſh to hold us up as atheiſtical perſons who fear not an oath, and ought not therefore to be tolerated in any civilized country? Explain yourſelf that we may know your opinion of the extent of our weakneſs or wickedneſs. We conſider ourſelves ſtill as Burgher Seceders, who plead for the lawfulneſs of at leaſt *one* oath, and this too an oath which reſpects religion; and I have yet heard of none of our miniſters or people who have ſuffered their property to be loſt, or criminals to eſcape, by declining to ſwear when lawfully called.

In fine, it is ſomewhat remarkable that, notwithſtanding your copious extracts from our ſtandards, you ſhould have omitted the *only* article in the whole larger Catechiſm at which any of us ſtartle:—"Sins forbidden in the ſecond commandment are—*tolerating* a falſe reli-

* Page 28. † Pages 40, 41.

gion—." Did this omiſſion proceed from a recollection that your own ſentiments, in the year 1778, were looſer than our own, and in the moſt *direct* manner contradicted this part of the doctrine of thoſe "ſtandards which you yourſelf had ſubſcribed as the confeſſion of your faith, and which you were ſolemnly engaged to adhere to*?" Your words are memorable. I print them in your own manner. "Though every religion were enumerated which now exiſts, from the riſing to the ſetting ſun, THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION WILL TOLERATE THEM ALL, *provided they teach no opinions which are deſtructive to the ſtate, or dangerous to the particular members of it*†."

It is equally remarkable that, though there was ſomething friendly to lawful government which you found *even* —mark the expreſſion, it is full of meaning—"*even* in the Solemn League and Covenant‡," you have overlooked the clauſe which has given us moſt uneaſineſs, and ought to give the government of our country moſt uneaſineſs with regard to rigid covenanters:—the obligation to "endeavour, *in like manner, without reſpect of perſons, the extirpation of prelacy*, &c." Were you afraid leſt the production of this paſſage might have diſcovered the true nature of our diſputes, and ſhewn our country that we incurred the diſpleaſure of our brethren, becauſe we refuſed to bind ourſelves to *extirpate* our rulers, many of whom are Epiſcopalians, and becauſe we were pleaſed with the conſtitution of our country, though it ſuffered us as a ſect to exiſt?

It were endleſs to remark all the low artifices which you employ, in order to provoke our country againſt us.

* Page 18.

† Porteous's doctrine of toleration, p. 13.

‡ Page 33.

—Your literary blunders muſt of courſe be overlooked; ſome of which are ſo groſs that few Seceding miniſters could have fallen into them. I only inſtance in your celebrated alluſion to "the Pantheon in France," which, it ſeems, you imagine is the receptacle of men who are "taken from their graves to be held up to infamy *!" whereas every one knows that a Pantheon is a place dedicated to the honour of thoſe gods, heroes or men, whoſe bodies are depoſited, or whoſe ſtatues are erected in it. On ſuch proofs of ignorance, however, I ſay no more. It might be deemed invidious to draw aſide the veil, and diſplay ignorance under an academical title: There are ſpots even in the ſun.

For a ſimilar reaſon I muſt paſs over your only remaining remark on our Preamble. It is on the word *ſuppreſs* in our recommendation to bury the controverſy †. You intended it for wit; you was out of your element, and you produced only a miſerable quibble.

Your remarks on our Synod's Addreſs to the people, are not entitled to more particular notice. This Addreſs deſerved, and from an honourable opponent would have obtained, very marked attention. It contains, not a few "cautious and ambiguous words ‡," but an open and unambiguous aſſertion of their loyalty, and an exhortation to their people to "perſevere in their loyal and dutiful ſubjection ‖" to their rulers; and an authoriſed explanation of their meaning in the Preamble §. But, at the firſt you only throw a paſſing ſneer of "cant, and a parade of loyalty ¶;" and of the ſecond you are as ſilent, as if you had not known that they had ever given any explanation of their meaning at all. You only charge the addreſs with concealing, for ſome very ſiniſter reaſon, a minute which

* Pages 35, 36. † Pages 53, 54. ‡ Page 35.
‖ See Addreſs, page 10. § Addreſs paſſim. ¶ Page 52.

ſome friend had pilfered for your benefit*; but which in fact had no relation to the buſineſs, as it had been proclaimed through the Seceſſion twelve months before; and with attempting to circulate a clumſy lie, which it had not the art to diſguiſe †.

I cannot, however, diſmiſs you before I take ſome notice of three charges more which you bring againſt us, and endeavour to hold up to our country in a very ſerious point of view. In the progreſs of this controverſy we have not been uniform in our expreſſions; our meaſures have been varied; and it was introduced at a very critical period in the hiſtory of Britain.

Permit me firſt to pay due honour to your criticiſms on the "terms in which the ſubject of this controverſy is expreſſed ‡." They are indeed the moſt ſplendid ornament of your work. Your page gliſtens with Latin, and with Roman law. Yet, though it dazzles, it does not confound us. Some of us can ſmile at a ridiculous attempt to aſcertain the meaning of vulgar Engliſh phraſes by quotations from Latin authors; but we muſt frown on an attempt to confound the law of Britain, a free country, with the Roman law under the lower empire, and to ſubſtitute the Theodoſian code, the Pandects of Juſtinian, or the works of any Roman lawyer, in the room of our common ſenſe.

Mr Frazer, it ſeems, in his petition, had uſed the phraſe *in regard to* religion; our committee preferred *reſpecting* religion; the Synod, or their clerk, wrote, *in matters of religion*; a minority in our committee, more learned than their brethren, ſpake Latin, and ſaid *circa ſacra*. This is our crime. You condemn our Engliſh; but, faithful to your opinion, that we "ſhould have pub-

* Page 47. † Ibid. ‡ Page 37---39.

liſhed for the benefit of our people *," and ought to have " condeſcended ſo far as to ſatisfy our congregations *in this way* †," you praiſe an attempt of the minority to edify them with Latin, and would have celebrated our loyalty if we had been equally condeſcending!

I have been at ſome pains to learn whether there be any difference at all between the phraſes *in regard to* and *reſpecting* religion; but I have not ſucceeded: Dr Johnſton could give me no aſſiſtance. A ſhade of difference I can diſcover between theſe and the two other phraſes, *in matters of* and *in* religion, under the laſt of which we now hide our ſeditious heads ‡; for the two former may refer to what is exterior to religion, though it regards, reſpects, or looks directly towards it, while the two latter ſeem to expreſs what ſomehow belongs to religion, is one of its matters, or is included in the idea of religion. Now, compare this with your *circa ſacra*: "The Confeſſion ſays on this ſubject, 'The civil magiſtrate may not aſſume to himſelf the adminiſtration of the word and ſacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven;' that is, *they* § deny any power to the civil magiſtrate, *circa ſacra* ‖." But what is this power *circa ſacra*, which you ſo poſitively deny him? I cannot tranſlate your favourite words more literally, than when I ſay, that it is a power *about* religion, or *things ſacred*. It is loyal, then, to deny him

* Page 21. † Ibid. ‡ Page 51.

§ Is not the Doctor's *they* in this ſentence a complete match for the Synod's *ſuch* in the Preamble? *They* deny---who? the Confeſſion of Faith; or does he mean the theologians? or rather the Roman lawyers? "It ſeems doubtful whether any ſentence in the Engliſh language can be ſo conſtructed as to comprehend more obſcurity and ambiguity than that which is referred to," New Light examined, page 51. "The words are ſo completely encompaſſed with different meanings, that he may at any time give a convenient preference to whichſoever he pleaſes." Ibid.

‖ Page 39.

power *about* religion, to ſuffer him to have no power in reſpect to what ſurrounds, guards, and protects religion, at leaſt if we ſpeak Latin; but it is ſeditious and diſloyal to entertain even a doubt whether he have power *in regard to*, or *reſpecting* religion; that is, in things which are not merely *about* it, but which *look* directly *towards it!!!* Nonſenſe, Sir, amuſes me, when it aſſumes, as in your pamphlet, the grave airs of wiſdom, and proceeds from learned lips.

I always underſtood, Sir, that the externals of religion were, in ſome meaſure, within the magiſtrate's province; and I have been the leſs diſpoſed to allow him power, in reſpect to any matter connected with religion, the more cloſely and intimately the matter is related to it. *In* religion, I allow him no power; *in matters of* religion, I allow him a little; in what *reſpects* religion, or *regards* it, I allow him more; and *circa ſacra*, or *about* the externals of religion, I give him a great deal of power. Such are my ſentiments, and my diſtinctions, on this celebrated queſtion. But, Sir, you treat me cruelly. You diſconcert all my ideas. You give the civil magiſtrate none *circa ſacra*, or *about* religion; and you charge me with ſedition, becauſe I am diſpoſed to curtail his power *in matters of*, and to deny him all power *in* religion. Is it loyal in you to take from him by force a power which he poſſeſſes, and to compel him to accept a power which he has again and again declined?

My readers will forgive me this trial of their patience. I will not put it to a ſeverer trial by an examination of your *res ſacræ*, your *res religioſæ*, and your *res ſanctæ* *. Indeed I might have fallen before ſo bewitching a temptation, if you had put it in my power; but I have not

* Page 38.

been able to diſcover in what manner you apply theſe diſtinctions of the Roman lawyers for the illuſtration of our words; and it is ſoon enough to attempt an anſwer, when I underſtand the objection.

From the variety of expreſſion which we have employed, you proceed, under equal alarm, to the variety of ſhapes which the buſineſs has in its progreſs aſſumed *. Formerly you found ſedition lurking under every phraſe; you now detect it under every meaſure which has been propoſed, or abandoned; adopted, or rejected. You have indeed been well employed: For five long years you have ſat, like a ſpider in its duſty corner, watching the motions of the heedleſs flies, who ſported in a dangerous neighbourhood; till, at laſt, you have entangled them in your web, and exulting drag the trembling captives to your den.

We acknowledge that we have changed our meaſures; but not ſo frequently as you have ſtated. The new formula and act of forbearance were not in reality two different meaſures, but one: they were introduced, and diſmiſſed in company. But what although we have changed them both? From firſt to laſt our meaſures were equally free of ſedition in the intention of the Synod, and in the mode of propoſing and expreſſing them. Why then, you will ſay, did we not abide by one ſpecific meaſure? Becauſe we had leſs than you ſuppoſe of that "obſtinate perſeverance which accompanies the ſpirit of innovation †;" and had nothing at all of that daring hardihood which General Aſſemblies diſplay in purſuing uniformly, and without change, or ſhadow of change, a ſyſtem which alienates the affections of the people, and have rendered a Seceſſion neceſſary. We wiſhed to pleaſe our people, as far as was conſiſtent with our own integrity;

* Pages 45, 46. † Page 45.

and if we have not completely gained our object, it is good that it was in our heart.

Yet even in this change of formulas, the General Assembly set us the example. Their formulas followed not one another indeed with equal rapidity as ours; for the larger the body, the slower the motion; but I find that in the course of a few years they had precisely the same number with us. In 1690 they had one formula; a new one in 1694; another new one in 1711; and after all, the Assembly 1717 seem to have entertained some hope that this formula would soon give way to a successor *. I find no fault with them: As you say, they were "altered by the authority which made them obligatory †," which, you know, was not the case in our Synod!

Your last retreat is to "the complexion of the times ‡;" where you concentrate, before you conclude ‖, the venom of your whole pamphlet. After upbraiding us with ingratitude for a toleration § which you told us, in the year 1778, we did not enjoy ¶, you represent us as having organized a system of rebellion against the State. In the year 1795, on the 2d day of September of that melancholy year, when Britain was encompassed with danger of every kind, the Associate Synod presumed "to appoint a Committee to review the questions of their Formula, and to bring in an overture for uniting their members in their sentiments respecting the power given," not in the British Constitution, but "in our Confession of faith, to *the* civil magistrate in matters of religion, and respecting the obligation of our national Covenants upon posterity **." Such

* "---Such as is, or shall be agreed to and approven by the Assemblies of this church." Act x. Assembly 1717.

† Page 48. ‡ Page 36. ‖ Page 54, 55. § Page 52.

¶ See quotation at the bottom of page 44.

** See Proceedings, page 6.

is your proof of our treaſonable deſigns. Let me weigh it.

In the year 1795, we did, what at all times we had liberty to do; what we were conſcious then, and are perſuaded ſtill, had no connection with politics; what was at any time lawful, and at no time could do our country harm———Harm! In that year we did what our country muſt have wiſhed. We threw a religious queſtion among a people, whoſe whole attention was occupied by politics, and endeavoured, as far as our influence reached, to divert them from dangerous ſpeculations, to a ſpeculation which, however ruinous it might in the event be to ourſelves in our profeſſional character, might be ſalutary to our country.

But you cannot forgive us for our injudicious choice of a period for ſuch diſcuſſions. For our ſakes, you load the year, not with its own infamy merely, but with the crimes and calamities of preceding and following years. Your periods might ſtill have flowed, although you had crowded them with dates; they would, at any rate, have gained in perſpicuity and accuracy what they loſt in ſtrength. How would they have read, if written thus: More than twelve months after Watt and Downie, two obſcure traitors, had been convicted of high treaſon, and almoſt three years before Ireland broke out into rebellion; near the middle of a period of four years, during which, not only Horne Tooke and Thelwal were tried, and, whether innocent or not, were acquitted by a jury of their country, but his Majeſty's arms were not uniformly ſucceſsful,---*then* the Aſſociate Synod dared to ſay, that in order to ſhew themſelves grateful for the toleration which they enjoy, they muſt no longer be in their principles intolerant; and that, to demonſtrate their loyalty, they muſt no longer condemn

thoſe acts of the Legiſlature, by which, as a religious ſociety, they are permitted to exiſt.

The paragraph to which I have alluded has particularly caught my attention. It is perhaps the beſt compoſed, and is beyond queſtion the moſt illiberal and wicked in your whole pamphlet. Suffer me to make a ſecond attempt to imitate it: "How much was it to the honour of this Synod, that they came forward in April 1798, to addreſs their Sovereign, and for this purpoſe ſuſpended the whole of the buſineſs for which they had met.—At that time, the minds of the loyal part of the community, were more agitated than in any former period of our hiſtory. The enemies of our peace and liberty, not long before, had employed the very bulwark of our country as the engine of our deſtruction; and now were exciting revolution at home by a moſt formidable combination, while abroad they were buſied in a deſperate attempt to diſmember the empire. Our fleets, which had become the terror of the people whom they had been accuſtomed to defend, had indeed returned to their duty; but Ireland had erected the ſtandard of rebellion. The preſent grand Conſul of France was embarking to deprive us of our poſſeſſions in the eaſt. Societies of united Iriſhmen were producing ſocieties of united Scotchmen *, and of united Engliſhmen, leagued together to dethrone our King, to deſtroy our Parliament,

* It is a curious fact, that in the ſearch that was made in the town of Dunfermline for evidence againſt this ſecret cabal, a paper was found in the houſe of one, who I underſtand, has ſince fled the country, which at firſt was ſuppoſed to refer to their plans. It turned out to be a bond to ſtand by one another in oppoſing the Aſſociate Synod. In Fife, the paper was known by the name of the Miln-a-thort covenant. It ſeems that it is poſſible for meaſures of oppoſition to the government, and to the Aſſociate Synod, to be conducted by the ſame perſons, and communicated through the ſame channels.

to overthrow our conſtitution, to plunder the wealthy, and to murder the active citizens. In a word, ſedition and treaſon were walking about at noon-day. When our country was in theſe circumſtances; when our government knew not to which hand to turn, neceſſity ſo urgent preſſing them on every ſide; when they were ignorant of the extent of the plot, and knew not whom to truſt,—THEN the Aſſociate Burgher Synod, unſolicited, impelled by the pure ſentiment of loyalty, and by deteſtation of rebellion and revolution, ſeized with eagerneſs the very firſt opportunity of addreſſing the throne, and aſſuring their gracious Sovereign of their dutiful and unſhaken attachment to his perſon and government; *then* that Synod whom Dr Porteous has dared to repreſent as a Synod of traitors, unanimouſly, though diſcouraged by a former unſucceſsful attempt to preſent an addreſs to the throne, and though ſolitary in ſuch attempts among Scotch Preſbyterian diſſenters, did what little lay within their power, to ſtrengthen the hands of government in a moment of peculiar trial and diſtreſs. Was not this an act of loyalty of which they have no reaſon to bluſh; and for which none but enemies to their country will dare to ſneer at them? Was not this a proof that they had not degenerated from the tried loyalty of the firſt Seceders, and that their characters as dutiful ſubjects can be reviled only by the foul breath of envy, or the malevolent ſpirit of bigotry? And *now*, when, by the mercy of God, and his bleſſing on the energy of government; now, when alarm has ceaſed, when the arm of rebellion has been broken, when ſedition only ſculks in corners, when our fleets are loyal and triumphant, when the deſigns of our enemies have been fruſtrated, and their gigantic power diminiſhed, *now* this Doctor will whine the ſong of loyalty, and yet calumniate a people who, like a

faithful band, clung round the throne and the conſtitution, in the day of their moſt imminent danger."

You ſee that, were I to imitate your ſtyle and manner, I could make "a parade of loyalty" in behalf of the Aſſociate Synod, as pompous as you have made againſt them. But I diſdain it. In addreſſing their Sovereign at that critical period, they only did their duty; they only expreſſed the genuine feelings of their heart; they only acted agreeably to thoſe ſentiments with which they have been uniformly inſpired, of love to their king, of veneration for the conſtitution, of gratitude for the many civil and religious privileges which, under the preſent government, they enjoy, and of deteſtation of revolution and anarchy. Has ever one Seceding miniſter been charged with ſeditious practices, during this whole period of alarm? Or if perhaps one ſolitary individual has been for a moment ſuſpected, is he now one of their members? or has his *patriotiſm* driven him from their communion? Yet had even every twentieth man among the members of our Synod been not only charged with ſedition, but tried, condemned and incarcerated as ſeditious, it would have been illiberal and unjuſt to implicate the whole body in the crimes of the few. It would militate with equal force againſt the Eſtabliſhed Preſbytery of Glaſgow, which is compoſed of clergymen of known loyalty, and implicate yourſelf as one of its members.

Sir, I am but a young man compared with you; yet permit me, before I conclude, to give you one advice. If you be that real friend to your king and the conſtitution which you profeſs, never hereafter attempt to ſerve them, either by going out of your proper ſphere, or by bringing charges of diſloyalty againſt thoſe who are, in every reſpect, as good citizens as yourſelf. You may pleaſe yourſelf with the idea that, in thus collecting

and publiſhing the ſuſpicions of your own mind, you are recommending yourſelf to thoſe in power, and doing eſſential ſervice to your country. But in fact you do it, as well as yourſelf, extenſive and ſerious injury. The more your charges obtain credit, the greater is the injury you do; for if you once deprive men of their reputation, you take from them one principal guard of their virtue; and the reſiſtance to temptation is commonly weak when there is no character to be loſt by compliance. And ſhould you ſucceed in perſuading the world that the Burgher Seceſſion are a body of ſeditious men, you would not only ſour their tempers againſt a country which is unjuſt to them, but would take away almoſt every worldly motive to continue the loyal and dutiful people which they have heretofore been. I ſpeak not thus from any diffidence in my brethren, but from what I know of human nature. I am perſuaded that their loyalty is founded on the fear of God more than on the fear of man, and that they are faithful from conſcience rather than from prudence. Beſides, calumny, though it ſhould obtain credit for a moment, will ſoon be detected, and recoil on him who uttered it. "The lip of truth ſhall be eſtabliſhed for ever; but a lying tongue is but for a moment." Enlightened rulers will not ſuffer themſelves to be long miſled; truth will ſooner or later reach their ears; and after they have diſcovered the impoſition, they will deſpiſe the impoſtor. The jackal, who hunts for the lion, may at length become ſo troubleſome by his yelping, as to be treated with an indignity, which I muſt not name, by the royal beaſt, or ſilenced for ever by a ſtroke of his paw.

I have treated you with freedom, perhaps with aſperity; but when I meet with a fair and honourable adverſary, I promiſe him very different uſage. This is my apology: You have attacked the religion, the loy-

alty, the common ſenſe of my brethren and myſelf. You have attempted to ruin us, our families and our flocks; to deprive us of character, of liberty, yea of life—How could I ſpeak ſmoothly to ſuch a man?

When I ſaw the title of your pamphlet, I pronounced on its merit. I was never yet miſtaken in my concluſion, that when an adverſary, or his ſentiments, are nick-named in the title page, what follows it is low and contemptible ſtuff.

I am,

SIR, &c.

THE END.

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